

GENTLEMAN DICK



BY
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ROSCOE

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GENTLEMAN DICK

By

TREVE ROSCOE

AUTHOR OF

“THE MAN WHO STOLE THE CROWN,” “THE BELGRAVE
MYSTERY,” ETC., ETC.



LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.

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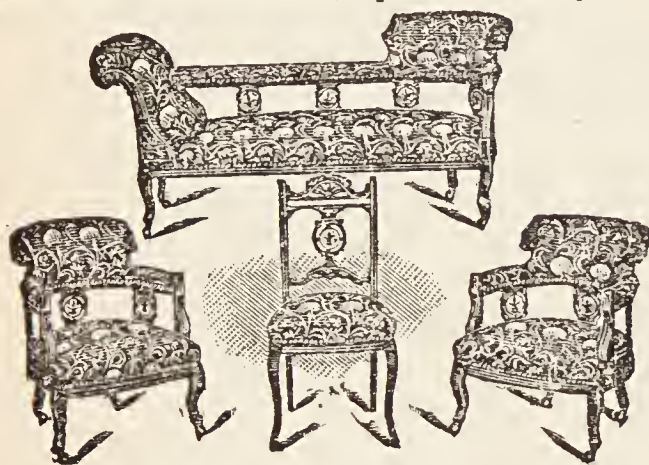
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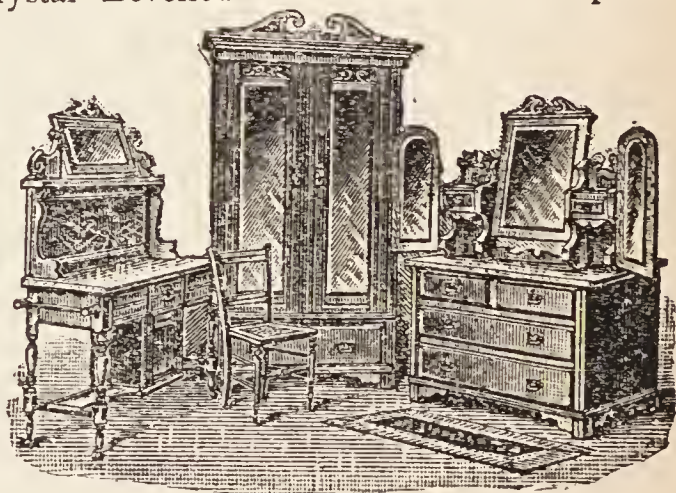
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Gentleman Dick



CHAPTER I

IN a shady backwater on one of the upper reaches of the Thames, a punt was moored under the overhanging trees through the branches of which the slanting beams of the setting sun shone with a radiance like gold.

At one end of the punt a girl reclined on a heap of cushions, her fingers playing nervously with a marguerite she had gathered from the bank. A broad-rimmed panama shaded her face, which was unquestionably pretty, beneath which her fair hair escaped in little curls that clustered on her brow.

Facing her, a young man sat, whose eyes were full of earnest pleading. Broad shouldered, clean-limbed, with an unmistakable look of good breeding, it could not be said that Ronald

Herondale was otherwise than well-favoured in face and feature.

"It is no use saying any more, Ronald. It can never be," said the girl, gently, when he paused in his pleading. "You know we are poor and so are you. Mother tries to make a brave show on nothing and she has nearly come to the end of her tether. Oh how I loathe this life of make-believe. No. I must marry money."

"Think for a moment," she continued in a steady voice. "What would your three hundred a year be between us. It would be simply madness. Why, it would scarcely keep us in food and clothes," she concluded with a mirthless little laugh.

"But you always said you loved me, Madge," the young

fellow broke in, as he leaned forward and tried to grasp her hands. "You know you do. You cannot deny it."

"I did not deny it," replied the girl, calmly, as she slowly withdrew her hands from his, "but I must do what others have had to do, barter love for wealth. That's all."

"It is infamous and wicked," he cried angrily. "You shall not sacrifice yourself if I can prevent it. If you throw me over now, I'll go straight to the devil."

"Hush, Ronny. It's ridiculous talking like that. You might spare me this. Heaven knows it's hard enough to do one's duty, but you need not make it harder. Come, dear lad," she added persuasively, "let us talk no more. It's getting late. Take me back to the 'Cottage.'"

With a dark, hopeless look of despair on his face, Herondale saw it was useless arguing further, so turning and releasing the painter, he seized the pole which he thrust viciously into the water and soon propelled the punt into the open river.

The sun had set and everything looked grey and chill as they sped swiftly down stream.

Now and again in the silence

the girl raised her eyes to look at the stalwart figure in white standing at the stern, as he raised the dripping pole and dropped it into the water with rhythmic monotony.

Did he feel it as much as he said, she wondered. It would all come right in a little time. Men's hearts were not so easily broken. In a few weeks' time he would probably forget all about her. Such were the thoughts with which she solaced herself.

But she learned nothing from his face which was set and stern, as she glanced at him in the fast gathering dusk. In a few minutes they were gliding beneath the arches of Maidenhead bridge. The silence was getting monotonous.

"Ronald!" she ventured, in a timid voice at length. But Herondale absorbed in his work appeared not to hear her.

"Ronny!" she cried again a little louder.

He glanced at her in reply.

"Will you try and forget all about me?" she asked, looking up at him.

"Yes I will try," he jerked out slowly.

She sighed, as if with regret that he should so readily

acquiesce in her wish. He didn't feel it so much after all then she mused, and womanlike, almost felt sorry she would not occupy some place in his heart.

Slowly the punt glided alongside the little landing-place at the foot of a trim-kept lawn.

Shipping his pole, Herondale sprang lightly ashore and held out his hand to assist the girl.

"Ronny," she asked, softly, with a tremor in her voice as they stood for a moment together.

"You won't think hardly of me will you?"

He made no reply as he dropped her hand, but stepping back into the punt seized the pole once more.

"And this is the end," he said, with a bitter laugh as he pushed off from the bank.

The girl stood motionless for a moment, and watched his fast receding figure in the dusk, then with something like a sob she turned and ran quickly up the lawn.

CHAPTER II

WOODBINE COTTAGE was one of those modern, red brick erections of the bungalow type, which the local house agent is wont to describe as, "a charming bijou riverside residence," with a garden and narrow lawn sloping down to the river. If not beautiful in itself, the garden was aglow with colour, and roses of almost every hue bloomed in profusion. The verandah was purple with clematis, and the hanging flower baskets gay with scarlet geraniums, daisies and lobelia.

On the well-kept lawn, beneath the shade of an umbrella tent, Mrs Cardew reclined on a low wicker chair with a novel opened in her lap.

Although rapidly approaching the meridian of life she showed little traces of the finger of time to the casual observer. Her dark hair, which was dressed in the most fashionable style, was not yet silvered, and her face, with

the exception of the tell-tale lines at the corners of the mouth and eyes, which even art cannot altogether disguise, had still a certain youthfulness. Her present attitude was typical of her character. She loved to recline. She had for so many years posed as an invalid, she had at last become to believe that she really was one. The widow of a major in the Indian service, she had lived the earlier part of her married life in the East. On the plea of the necessity of finishing the education of their only child Madge, she persuaded her husband to retire from the service and return to England. But the major was not destined to enjoy his leisure long, for a few months after his return, he fell a victim to pneumonia and died after a short illness. Left with a limited income, and her daughter's education to finish, Mrs Cardew took up her residence at Brighton.

Owing to her long sojourn in

India, she had lost track of most of the friends of her early days, until one season at Brighton, she had come across an old school-fellow in the person of Lady Vandall, and they at once renewed their friendship. The effect of Lady Vandall's influence was soon apparent on her friend.

A woman of the world to her finger tips, and, one who loved above all things to manage other people's affairs. My lady soon imbued the pensive Mrs. Cardew with an ambition to shine in Society—Madge must be brought out in a manner befitting her station, she continually impressed on the girl's mother. So my lady's decree was carried out, and shortly after Madge had left school, Mrs Cardew left Brighton and settled in a small flat in South Kensington which she shared with her friend.

Lady Vandall had resolved that Madge should marry a wealthy man, and the girl was soon to be seen at most of the pleasure resorts of society.

The life Mrs. Cardew had been plunged into had greatly depleted her means, and already she had been obliged to draw upon her capital. Her income had considerably diminished in con-

sequence, but her faith in the prophecies of her friend was still unshaken.

Of suitors, Madge had many, but they had either been of the detrimental type or she had raised some objection to them.

The only man, so far, for whom she had shown any preference, was Ronald Herondale, the younger son of a peer, who was not too well endowed with this world's goods. Herondale had been intended for the Army, but having failed at Sandhurst had thrown it up in disgust, and was then living an aimless kind of existence on a small income he had inherited from his mother.

At his first meeting with Madge Cardew he had fallen hopelessly in love with her, and had contrived every possible means of seeing her as often as he could. Then Lady Vandall seeing how matters were tending, had considered it her duty to warn Mrs. Cardew that young Herondale was not to be thought of for a moment and that he was ruining Madge's chances. She was sure that Mr. Bulstrode, who was reported to be figuratively rolling in wealth, had a great fancy for Madge, which only

needed a little cultivating to ripen into affection.

The name of Bulstrode was known much better in the East End of London than in the West, for the legend "Bulstrode's Entire" was to be seen at nearly every street corner from Bethnal Green to Bermondsey. The present owner of the great brewery and its tributaries was Marmaduke Bulstrode, known to his intimate friends as "Bully." He had recently taken Thirlmere Court near Maidenhead, and this item of news having been duly imparted by Lady Vandall to her

friend, Mrs. Cardew, it was suggested that the latter should take a riverside cottage for the season in the same locality.

Poor Mrs. Cardew, anxious to do anything to retrieve her fortunes, which she hoped to do by her daughter's marriage to a wealthy man, fell in with the scheme, which ended in her taking up her residence at Woodbine Cottage.

When Herondale heard of Madge's departure from town, he too resolved to spend a month up the river, with what result we already know.

CHAPTER III

"MADGE dear," said Mrs. Cardew, in a languid voice, as she glanced up from a book she was reading, and looked at her daughter who was seated a five yards from her, absorbed in the last number of the "Gentlewoman." "You did not tell me what kept you so late last evening. We waited more than half an hour for you."

"I was on the river," replied the girl, nonchalantly, without raising her eyes.

"Not alone, I hope?"

"No, mother, Mr. Herondale was with me."

"Oh," ejaculated Mrs. Cardew shortly, "I thought after our conversation the other day you would not have encouraged him to come here again."

"I did not encourage him. Far from it," replied Madge with some animation. "But do not be distressed, he is not likely to come again."

"Dear child, I am so glad," cried Mrs. Cardew, as she actu-

ally raised herself on her elbow.

"Then you have dismissed him altogether. Tell me all about it?"

"Thank you, mother, but I would rather not talk about it just now. It is sufficient he has gone and is not likely to come back," replied Madge as she endeavoured to absorb herself in the paper which she held before her face.

"Very well, dear child, just as you please. I'm sure it has taken quite a load off my mind. You know, Madge, there was something about young Herondale I always liked. He was always so well groomed, and had such good taste in neckties. I had nothing against him at all personally, but his financial position and prospects were positively hopeless. Now with Mr. Bulstrode," continued Mrs. Cardew, raising her voice, "the position is just reversed, although in a way he is really a nice—"

"Pray, mother, spare me a catalogue of his virtues. You have repeated them so often," broke in Madge, with some asperity. "Let me put it plainly for you. Mr. Bulstrode is an estimable person, wealthy beyond reproach, whom you specially wish me to marry, so that he may be able to pay off our debts and keep us in luxury in the future. That is the plain unvarnished truth is it not?"

"Hush, dear child, you shock me," murmured Mrs. Cardew, as she made a pretence of stopping her ears. "You are so painfully frank, Madge."

"It is best to be so at times," responded the girl with a slight shrug of her shoulders.

"Whatever Mr. Bulstrode's imperfections are, I am sure he will make a good husband, and it is your interests I have most at heart," murmured Mrs. Cardew, plaintively.

"Ha, here you are!" broke in a shrill feminine voice, as a tall woman with a profusion of fair hair surmounted by a white motor cap, stepped through the open window on to the lawn. Close behind her followed a short, rather stout man of florid complexion, with reddish hair and moustache.

"I have brought Mr. Bulstrode in with me," continued Lady Alicia Vandall, as she subsided into a vacant chair.

"Am afraid I'm getting a very frequent visitor, Mrs. Cardew," remarked the gentleman named, as he raised his cap and took that lady's extended hand, and then bowed to Madge.

"Not by any means too frequent," replied Mrs. Cardew, smiling. "Will you find yourself a chair, for I'm sure you would like some tea. Madge will you ring the bell."

"I am positively dying for a cup," exclaimed Lady Alicia as she drew off her gloves and glanced critically at her jewelled fingers. "We have had such a ripping spin, right away to Guildford and back. I'm sure you'll get smashed up in that car some day, Mr. Bulstrode," she continued.

"Very likely. No one can be considered an expert chauffeur nowadays until he has had at least three or four spills and a broken head," replied Bulstrode with a grin.

"Well I hope you'll be alone when it happens," remarked Madge smiling, as she poured out the tea.

"I sincerely hope, at least, that you will not be with me, Miss Cardew. But you must try my new Panhard. It is a flier," said Bulstrode, as he rose to pass the cups.

"Motoring has no charms for me," remarked Mrs. Cardew. "The constant shaking and horrid smell upsets my nerves altogether."

"Oh, but I can assure you all cars are not so bad. In this one there is scarcely any vibration at all. Cannot I tempt you to try it, Mrs. Cardew?"

"No, I am afraid not. You shall take Madge instead."

"I shall only be too delighted. When will you come, Miss Cardew?" rejoined Bulstrode, as he fixed his eyes on the girl's face.

"Oh, I'll let you know," said Madge carelessly. "Just now, the river has greater attractions for me than the road."

"Well come and look at the new car," said Bulstrode rising and placing his empty cup on the table. "I have left her in the lane at the back. She is a twenty horse power Panhard I've had built expressly for me."

Bidding good-bye to the other ladies Bulstrode followed Madge

up the side path to the narrow lane which led to the front of the Cottage.

As he held the little gate open for her to pass through, his eyes openly expressed his admiration of her beauty.

"Oh, it is a beauty!" cried Madge, in admiration, as they stood for a few moments together by the side of the car.

"She is yours if you will have her, including the owner, Madge," exclaimed Bulstrode suddenly in a hoarse whisper in her ear.

The girl's face flushed crimson, and she drew back instinctively.

"Don't be offended, Miss Cardew. I have surprised you, haven't I? But I mean it. I do 'pon my word."

Madge looked at him as if paralysed and unable to speak or move.

"Do you mean this as an offer of marriage, Mr. Bulstrode?" she said at length, very slowly.

"Certainly, my dear. What else could I mean? I do want you to marry me; and then car and all I have is yours. Now have I made it plain?" he blurted out.

"Yes, you have indeed," said the girl, as if in a dream.

The moment then had come and her tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of her mouth.

He stood by her side with his hands stuffed deep into the pockets of his coat, his florid face a shade or two deeper in colour, and his eyes fixed upon her as if appraising the points of a horse.

"You must give me time to think," she stammered at last, unable to repress a shudder

as she raised her eyes to his face.

"I'll come to-morrow to take you for a run, and you can give me an answer then, will you?" he added, persuasively, as he touched her lightly on the shoulder.

"Bye bye now," he cried, merrily, as he shook her hand and jumped into the car.

"Eleven sharp, mind. Don't forget!"

CHAPTER IV

THERE are several methods of carrying out the not uncommon feat of "going to the devil," most of which are so well known to mankind at large that they need not be described here.

All the roads that lead in that delectable direction are generally short, and "the devil" stands waiting at the end in the form of a remorse that surely comes, and must inevitably be faced.

When Ronald Herondale left the girl he loved that evening at the foot of the lawn of Woodbine Cottage with this resolve, he had probably no idea which road he was going to take.

Of a warm and impulsive temperament, and a character by no means strong, for a time he seemed to lose his mental equilibrium and was ready to do anything desperate. The thing he desired most he could not have, and his disappointed passion found vent in riot of living.

With a young man in this

frame of mind logical reasoning is impossible.

He had known little of home life and influences since the days of his childhood. His mother had died when he was but a boy, and after some years at Harrow and his term at Sandhurst which ended so disastrously, much to his father's disgust, he settled down in London with no special aim in life. He resolved to live on the small income he had inherited from his mother, which on attaining his majority, he had full control.

His only brother Geoffrey, Lord Alvanley, who was many years his senior, was of a totally different disposition. Cold reserved and intensely proud, he went little into society and had nothing in common with Ronald, and for some years the brothers had scarcely met.

After settling in London, Ronald had written to his father more than once, asking him to

use his influence in obtaining some kind of an appointment for him; but beyond a cold acknowledgment of his letters he had received no response.

He knew Alvanley would not exert himself on his behalf, and he attributed a great deal of his father's indifference to his brother's influence. Young, good-looking, and generous to a fault, Ronald however did not lack friends, and soon acquired the reputation of being the best of good fellows, among his special set.

Until he had met Madge Cardew he had been heart-whole, but since their friendship had ripened into a warmer feeling, he had lavished on her all the love of his warm, passionate nature. For a time things had gone on smoothly, and he often pictured to himself the future, in a cottage somewhere in the country with Madge by his side, where the income he already found inadequate for one could be made to provide for two.

Then came the sudden end to his dreams caused by the final refusal of Madge, and he found himself adrift.

Without any occupation for his mind, and no one to give him

a calm word of advice, he became utterly reckless, until his escapades became the talk of the clubs, and his friends wondered what he would do next. In a few months he had already made considerable inroads into his capital, which he had given his solicitors instructions to realise, and now, after paying his debts he found himself with very little left. An announcement in the society papers that "a marriage would shortly take place between Miss Madge Cardew, daughter of the late Major Cardew, late of H.M.I. Service, and Marmaduke Bulstrode, Esq., of Halesworth Hall, Berks, and Park Lane, W." excited him to fresh excesses, and soon brought him near the end of his tether.

A considerable fortune can be squandered in a very short period, if a man sets himself to do it, and so Ronald Herondale's few thousands soon melted away, and after some months were at last reduced to about fifty pounds. This fact having been forcibly brought home to him, he decided to give a final supper to a few of his friends and then put an end to his life. The question as to how he should accomplish this

act exercised his mind for some time, and at length it occurred to him to pay a visit to a friendly chemist. To this individual he confided that he was going abroad for a long period and wished to poison his old terrier "Rip," in as painless a manner as possible, before his departure.

What poison would he advise him to use?

The chemist enlarged on the

agonies produced by strychnine and the difficulty attending the administration of prussic acid, finally suggested Chloroform as the most painless form of killing the animal. He described the manner in which the poison should be given, and after a while Herondale left the shop with a small bottle of that innocent looking liquid in his pocket.

CHAPTER V

A FRENCH clock on the mantelshelf of a private supper room at the Cafe Xerico had just chimed eleven, when Adolph, the head waiter, who had been putting some finishing touches to the table decorations, switched on the electric lights and surveyed the effect with satisfaction. The crimson shaded lamps shed a warm glow over the silver and glass, and deepened the colour of the flowers that adorned the table in profusion.

The chatter of voices and the swish of skirts coming up the staircase, warned him of the approach of his party and he threw open the door with a flourish.

"Here we are," cried Herondale, in a cheery voice as he ushered three girls, who were all trying to talk at the same time, into the room. "The others will be here presently I expect and you can serve when I ring," he continued to the waiter.

"Oh, what lovely roses!" exclaimed Dorothy Dane, as she bent over the table to inhale their fragrance.

"The table is too charming for anything," chimed in Kitty Revell, a pretty little brunette, with a glance of admiration at the decorations.

"Am glad you like it," remarked Herondale, "I meant it to be nice, as this you know is a kind of valedictory feast—I think that is the right word. This is the final—"

His words were interrupted by the entrance of two immaculately dressed young men.

"Ha, boys, we've been waiting for you," cried Ronald, eagerly.

"Awfully sorry, 'old chap," drawled the latter of the two, in the person of the Honourable Roger Wyncanton, "but I had to look in at the 'Berkeley,' then the blessed horse of the hansom fell down and—"

"Then I came across and

rescued him. Towed him along and here we are," chimed in Eric Derwent, who had a round smooth face destitute of hair, and was known to his friends as "the cherub."

"How do, Kitty," he exclaimed in greeting to that lady, and then waved his hand to the others.

"Now, ladies, do please remove your wraps and be seated," said Herondale, as he assisted Doris Dalton, a tall, fair girl to take off her cloak and bade her be seated on his right.

The others speedily paired themselves, and soon the meal was served by the deft Adolph.

"So you've made up your mind to leave town, Ronny," remarked Doris, as she looked up at him.

"Yes. I've resolved to cut it all and depart," replied Herondale calmly.

"And where are you off to, old man? Booked a passage for the Cape, or going a trip to the Rockies, eh?" asked Wyncanton.

"I don't know where I am going to."

"Let me decide for you, Mr. Herondale," lisped Kitty Revell. "Go to Paris and take me with you, there's a dear."

"Oh, I say," broke in the other girls in indignant tones.

"Take the three of 'em, old chap. That will settle it," drawled Derwent, as he motioned to the waiter to refill his glass.

"Nothing would have given me greater pleasure, ladies," said Herondale, with a peculiar smile; "but I'm afraid it is impossible this time. I'm booked to go alone."

"There is something mysterious about this journey," said Wyncanton. "He won't tell us where he is going to, or how long he will be away. I think it's a beastly shame, you know."

"Well, you'll write to me won't you, Ronny?" asked Doris sweetly.

"I can't promise, I'm afraid. But you'll soon forget all about me. Some other fellow will turn up and take my place in the giddy throng."

"Well, we won't forget the merry time we've had the last few months," rejoined Wyncanton, with a knowing smile.

"And we shant forget how good you've been to us," sighed Kitty Revell.

"Good old Ronny, you'll come back again and paint the town a brighter hue than ever," said "the cherub."

"No, old fellow. This is

positively the last night," replied Herondale, quietly.

Then a gloom seemed to come over everyone.

Herondale felt indeed like a man presiding at his own funeral feast. Even the girls seemed to become dull and cheerless.

Suddenly he roused himself with an effort and sprang to his feet.

"Come I'll give you a final toast," he cried, with a laugh. "Fill your glasses, girls and boys—a toast! a toast!"

"Let's have it," the men chorused.

"Here it is then. Let us drink to women, whom we men love, wine which we all love;—and—the devil!"

As he uttered the last word, the glass which he held aloft suddenly slipped from his trembling fingers and fell to the floor with a crash.

"The devil!" he shouted again, as he bent down, and slipped Kitty's tiny satin shoe off her foot.

"Bumpers," he exclaimed, as he filled the shoe with champagne and put it to his lips.

Shouts of laughter rang through the room as the others drained their glasses.

"Another magnum, Adolph," cried Herondale.

"Sorry, sir, but it's closing time," whispered the obsequious waiter in his ear.

As he spoke, some of the lights were turned out.

"I'm afraid we must ring down the curtain," said Herondale, as he rose to help the ladies with their wraps.

Downstairs they stood in a little group in the doorway, while the porter whistled for hansoms.

"Good-bye, old fellow. Good-bye Ronny," they cried as they drove off.

Herondale stood bareheaded on the footpath and waving his hand, watched them out of sight.

His hansom still stood at the kerb and in it sat Doris Dalton waiting.

"Aren't you coming," she said, softly, as he stood absently with one foot on the step.

"Not to-night," he replied quietly as he pressed her hand. "Good-bye, Doris."

He closed the cab doors as he spoke, and as the girl looked at him her eyes filled with tears.

He passed a coin to the driver, then thrusting his hands deep in his pockets he turned abruptly and walked slowly down the street.

CHAPTER VI

IT was after midnight when Herondale returned to his chambers, and entering his room switched on the light. "Rip," a broken-haired Irish terrier jumped up from the hearthrug on which he had been lying, and stretching himself, barked at him in welcome. Throwing his overcoat over the couch, he drew an easy chair up to the fire, which was almost out, and lit a last cigar.

The excitement of the last few hours had given place to a heavy depression which seemed to crush him, and he lay back, jaded in body and sick at heart.

"Rip" thrust his cold moist nose into his hand, which act of canine sympathy seemed to touch his master.

"Poor old doggie," he soliloquized, as he patted his head. 'I wonder what will become of you. I haven't the heart to take your life.'

The dog looked up at him with mute appeal in his eyes.

So this is the end, he thought to himself. He pictured to himself the discovery of his body next morning. The breaking open of the door and then—He must let his people know, although they wouldn't care, beyond the fact of the scandal and the dragging of their name into the daily papers. Yes, he decided he would write a letter to his father, which would at any rate prevent any suspicion of foul play, which might be brought against innocent people.

He tried to think for a few moments and compose his mind so he might put his thoughts into words, but his brain was still in a whirl with the effects of the wine.

Rising from his chair and walking across the room to a writing table, he drew a sheet of paper towards him and wrote:—

"Dear Father,

For reasons which are unnecessary to explain, I have resolved to end my life, and by the time you receive this I shall have entered the unknown. No blame attaches to anyone. Don't think I am insane. It is simply this, I have come to the end of my tether, and think it best to bring my useless life to a close.

Your son,

RONALD."

He did not pause to read the letter through, but folded the paper and placed it in an envelope, then sealed and addressed it and laid it on the blotting pad.

Unlocking the top drawer in the pedestal of the table, he took from it a small green bottle bearing a red label, on which was written the word "Chloroform."

He went back to his chair and put the bottle on the corner of the table in front of him.

"Death was within his reach," he thought to himself grimly, as he glanced at the bottle. He tried to recollect how the chemist had told him to use it, but he couldn't remember all he had said, surely if he poured the bottleful over a handkerchief it

would be enough. He had often read of people succumbing to the mere whiff from a bottle of chloroform.

Taking his handkerchief he carefully folded it corner ways on his knee, and laid it on the table, then crossing the room he locked the outer door.

He looked at his watch—It was twenty minutes past one—and then crossed to the table again. Taking the cork from the bottle he slowly poured the contents over the handkerchief and a sweet, sickly odour soon permeated the room. He switched off the light, and entered the bedroom adjoining then taking off his boots, he stretched himself full length on the bed and placed the handkerchief across his face.

As he lay there with closed eyes, he tried to compose himself to sleep, but all his senses seemed suddenly alert and intensified. Scraps of conversation which had taken place across the supper table a few hours previous came back to his mind, and he found himself repeating them again and again. His hearing seemed abnormally acute, and the ticking of the clock sounded like the ringing of a bell in his ears. Then came sounds of an unusual

character, more bells began ringing, then there was a whirring of wheels, in some great mill, which became louder and louder until they reached an almost deafening pitch. Then the sounds gradually subsided and became quieter and quieter, softer, and softer, until all was peace.

* * * * *

Slowly his numbed senses began to awaken, and consciousness returned. He opened his heavy eyelids to see the grey light of the dawn coming in through the windows.

What had happened? He strove to recall what he had done, but his head throbbed with pain.

Ah! now it all came back to him.

Yet he was alive. He passed his hand across his brow. The handkerchief had disappeared. Who had removed it? He turned his head wearily and looked through the open door into the sitting-room beyond. The dog was lying prone, apparently asleep, and near him there was something white on the floor.

He dragged himself from the bed and staggered into the adjoining room.

Yes it was "Rip," and by him lay

the handkerchief still smelling of chloroform odour. It must have been the dog then that had snatched the deadly handkerchief from his face, while he lay unconscious.

Quickly he knelt down by the animal. It was still breathing slowly, but with labour. Snatching the handkerchief away and seizing a water bottle from the sideboard, he dashed some on the dog's head. In a few moments he moved his limbs convulsively and then stretched his legs. Herondale lifted him in his arms and going to the window threw up the sash. The fresh air flooded the room and re-invigorated him. "Rip" opened his eyes at last with a low whine.

"Dear old fellow," murmured Herondale as he stroked his head tenderly. "So you saved my worthless life."

"Rip" looked at him with grateful eyes, as if he understood all he had said.

"Rip," he cried softly again, "we shall both live and live new lives."

He put the dog down and returned to the bedroom. Then he suddenly realised he was still in evening clothes. Opening his

wardrobe he took from it an old shooting jacket and knickerbockers of homespun, and quickly changed into them. Into the pockets he thrust all the articles of any value and money he possessed, not forgetting the empty chloroform bottle. Then he crept to the door, and unlocking it,

listened. No one was yet stirring. Putting on a cap and taking a stout oak stick from a corner, he put the dog under his arm and crept down the staircase. Noiselessly he unfastened the front door and closing it very quietly behind him, he stepped into the silent street.

CHAPTER VII

It was a lovely morning in early June, and the sun shone resplendent in a cloudless sky of blue. All nature seemed to be rejoicing. Above, a lark was soaring with fluttering wings and filling the air with its melody, while below in the lane, heaped with white May blossom and honeysuckle, the bees hummed as they flew from flower to flower.

It was a narrow Dorsetshire lane, hemmed in by high grassy banks, bright with golden buttercups, pink campion and yellow toadflax. Along the dusty road rumbled a caravan, drawn by a sturdy grey horse. The van was one of the usual type used by showmen, with two little windows on each side and a door at the back, but was painted a sober olive green and unadorned by stripes of yellow or red.

By the side of the horse a man strode with elastic step who looked a picture of rude health.

He was a tall, well made young fellow with good features, the lower part of his face being concealed by a heavy brown moustache and a short pointed beard. His attire was by no means fantastic, and consisted of a short jacket and knickerbockers of grey homespun, which, although much the worse for wear, were unquestionably of good cut. His head was crowned with a somewhat disreputable looking straw hat, and from his general get up he might have been taken for a wandering artist of the brush.

At his heels trotted an Irish terrier, who like his master seemed to be enjoying the glorious day.

It would have been difficult for even the most intimate of his former friends to have recognised in the individual described the once smart Ronald Herondale, who but twelve months previous, had been a well-known

figure in many a West End drawing-room.

Since his mysterious disappearance, which had caused some sensation, and at the time had been a nine days' wonder, he had travelled from one country town to another, sleeping in the caravan which he had bought with the last few pounds he possessed. He visited most of the fairs, giving a performance of his sleight of hand and other conjuring tricks, for which as an amateur he had been famous. This accomplishment he had now turned to practical account, and so had been able to earn enough to keep himself, the faithful "Rip" and the old horse, going. He enjoyed the free life in the open air, and wouldn't have exchanged his van for a palace.

"Come up there, Blinkers," he cried to the horse as he slapped his flanks.

The animal quickened his pace while his master filled a well-seasoned briar pipe and tramped contentedly along.

In about half an hour's time they arrived at Wimborough, where on the green, almost under the shadows of the old minster, a number of shows and vans were

drawn up in preparation for the opening of the fair.

Everyone was busy. Swinging boats were being erected, merry-go-rounds with their gaily caparisoned horses were being hoisted into position by brawny arms; booths and tents were being run up, and the proprietors of wax-work shows, freaks, and temples of mystery were all hard at work getting ready for business.

Our showman at length found a space for his van between one which housed the "Bouncing Lion from Bagdad," and "Mademoiselle Zep, the boneless wonder."

Unharnessing his horse, he tethered it at the back, and giving it a good feed proceeded to draw from its case a large canvas sign on which was inscribed in large letters,

PROFESSOR DEVLIN,
THE CHAMPION WIZARD OF THE
WORLD.

This he hung on the side of his van and then proceeded to cook himself a meal. The interior of his house on wheels was a model of neatness and compactness. A thick curtain arranged across the centre divided it into two compartments, the inner of

which he used as a sleeping room. On one side was a bed somewhat like a ship's bunk, and on the other, a compact little toilet stand with mirror and washing arrangements. The outer one contained a broad shelf along one side, which could be raised and utilised as a table, or lowered and used as a bed. In the corner was a stove with arrangements for cooking, while from the roof hung a brass duplex lamp. With some rugs on the floor, a cupboard for crockery and the walls draped with cretonne, the little room presented a most cosy appearance.

Dick Devlin, as we must call him (for that was the name he had adopted) climbed into his van, and lighting the stove put the kettle on to boil, to make himself a cup of tea.

Outside, the fair had begun, and the strident noise of the steam organs, the shouts of the showmen and the shrieks of whistles, already filled the air with a babel of sound.

He was busy toasting a piece of bread on a fork, when the door of the caravan was opened a few inches and a voice exclaimed. "Hello, Perfessur, here we are again!"

Dick turned to see who had spoken, and saw a head thrust in through the door.

"Hallo, Zep, is that you? Come in," he replied.

The door opened, fully this time, and a girl of about nineteen, climbed the steps and entered the van.

Her close cropped curly hair was capped by an old red Tam o'Shanter, which gave her the appearance of a boy more than a girl, and her features though irregular and somewhat coarse, were redeemed by a pair of dark brown eyes that gleamed with merriment. Though slightly built, she looked the embodiment of lithe muscular strength.

"Let me do that for yer," she exclaimed, as she snatched the fork from his hands and seated herself in front of the stove. "I've just given the old man his tea, and he's giving himself a bit of a polish up. I saw your van coming along and guessed you'd make for this pitch," she rattled on.

"I was a bit late in getting in," replied Dick, "and what luck have you had, Zep, eh?"

"Oh, pretty good on the whole, but that makes no difference to

me much—he spends it all, and he’s drinking something awful lately,” said the girl with a significant nod of her head in the direction of their van.

“That’s bad,” said Dick, gravely.

“You’d say so if you had to live with him for a week. He carries on like a madman—look at this,” said Zep, as she pulled her bodice down from her neck, and disclosed an ugly bruise on the shoulder. “That was his work.”

“The brute,” said Dick, with indignation.

“Lord love yer, that’s not much,” said the girl with a short laugh. “But here’s yer toast, burnt to a cinder nearly.”

“Zep! Zep!” bawled a raucous voice outside.

“There he is,” said the girl with a toss of her head, as she dropped the toasting fork, and made for the door of the van.

“So long,” she exclaimed, as she disappeared down the steps.

Dick finished his simple meal in silence, and giving the remains of the repast to “Rip” who waited expectantly, he proceeded to change his dress and prepare

for his performance. This being done, and having got his props, which consisted of a small three legged table, his magic wand, and couple of grotesque figures dressed as a boy and a girl, all ready, he surveyed the fair from the steps of his van.

Already the townsfolk were crowding on to the green, and the various showmen were busy declaiming at the top of their voices, the marvels that were to be seen within their respective shows.

His neighbour on the right arrayed in a light Newmarket coat, top boots and a low crowned white hat, was cracking a whip and describing the wonders performed by the “Bouncing Lion,” whose growls could now and then be heard by the crowd that had gathered round listening with open mouths. On the other side, a short thick-set man with a blotchy face, and reddish hair and whiskers, dressed in a velveteen jacket and tight trousers, was entreating the throng to walk up and pay their money and see the “boneless wonder;” the most extraordinary contortionist of the age.” By his side was the girl Zep, her well-knit figure now clad in light blue tights, edged

with silver spangles, her arms tracted attention by ringing a
akimbo, and hands resting on her bell vigorously announcing his
shapely hips. performance and joined in the

Then "Professor Devlin," at- babel of the fair.

CHAPTER VIII

THE various shows had given "positively their last performance for the night," and the townsfolk were wending their various ways homeward. The turf was strewn with confetti, and the last of the flaring lights had been extinguished, when Dick rolled up his canvas sign, and lighting his lamp betook himself to his van, to smoke a final pipe before turning in for the night.

He had extracted eggs from the mouths of the grinning yokels, and mystified them vastly by producing paper flowers innumerable, and live pigeons from their hats, and had received a good harvest of coppers in return. All was quiet outside, and after making a frugal supper of some biscuits and cheese, he lit his pipe and sat down in front of the stove.

Absorbed in thought and tired with his day's work he dozed off to sleep, when he was suddenly

aroused by a piercing scream. He was awake in a moment and listened. In a few seconds there was another scream and a cry for help. It was a woman's voice and he jumped up and in a minute had leapt from the van on to the green outside.

Again there was another scream, followed by curses and imprecations which came from the tent at the back of the van next to his. He ran towards it, and lifting the flap forming the door, rushed in.

A lamp still swung from the roof, its smoky flame blown by the draught, and by its light he saw a partially dressed girl struggling with a man who held her by the arm with one hand, while in the other he grasped a stout stick. As the blow was about to descend on her bare shoulders, Dick reached him and caught his arm in time.

With a roar like a wild beast, the infuriated man, evidently,

maddened with drink, turned on Dick who held him and lost his hold of the girl, who fell to the ground exhausted.

"Damn your eyes," cried the ruffian. "What do you want interfering for, eh?" as he turned on Dick and rushed at him.

Dick, however, skipped nimbly aside and avoiding the blow, hit out straight from the shoulder, catching the brute a blow on the point of the jaw that felled him like an ox.

Dick bent over the prostrate form of the girl, who pale and dishevelled opened her big lustrous eyes with a groan, and with a look of gratitude, like some dumb animal.

"It's all right, Perfessur," she stammered, when she found her voice and tried to pull herself together. "Get out of his way, quick, or he'll murder yer."

"I'm not afraid of him," replied Dick, quietly. "Let me help you to get up, and come

outside into the fresh air and it will revive you."

He raised the girl to her feet and assisted her outside the tent. Then he returned to look at the man. He found him still lying where he had fallen, breathing stertorously, having apparently lapsed into a drunken sleep. He appeared to be unhurt.

Outside the caravan he found Zep standing trembling.

"He is asleep, I think, and certainly not hurt. Have you no friends you can go to for the night?" he asked.

"No. I'll be all right. He'll sleep where he is till morning. It's because he's had a drop too much again I s'pose. I'll creep into the van. He won't harm me no more to-night. Thank yer, Perfessur. Good-night."

Dick saw her mount the steps of the van and disappear within, then returned to his own abode, and fastening the door, lay down to rest.

CHAPTER IX

ALTHOUGH Dick had spent over twelve months on the road, he knew little of the showmen he met at the fairs. Those he had come in contact with, he had found rough but mostly good-natured fellows, and though coarse and loud generally, they were ever ready to help one another, and lend a hand to those who wanted it. Some of them sneered at him and called him the "gentleman showman," while others dubbed him "a good sort," and were ever ready to apply to him for a loan.

By chance, he had several times happened to hit on a pitch next to Zep, whose father, known as Joe Travers, ran the show and lived on the proceeds of the exhibition of his daughter's prowess as an acrobat and contortionist. The girl had done him several little kindnesses in supplying him with water and milk when he had happened to run short, and would pop in and

out of his van when he happened to be in their proximity. She had a smile and a word for all, and was a general favourite at every fair.

Her mother, who had been a circus rider, had married Joe Travers, who was then manager of a small public house in Lambeth, and after a miserable married life of twelve years had died, leaving Zep, a girl of eleven, to be brought up by her father.

Anxious to get the girl off his hands, before she had turned twelve, Travers apprenticed her to a trainer of acrobats who saw in her a promising pupil. Inheriting a love of gymnastic exercises from her mother, Zep took to her calling with enthusiasm, and after considerable training was able to accomplish some wonderful feats in turning somersaults, and twisting her body into the most extraordinary contortions. The trainer was anxious to retain the girl for his

troup, but Travers, cunning enough to see he had an easier way of getting a living within his reach, refused all offers, gave up his employment, and investing his all in a caravan, determined to turn showman and exploit his daughter's attainment to his own advantage.

Zep's performance always attracted a good audience at the fairs, and Travers found the life to his liking. Flush with money, the brutal instincts of his coarse nature developed rapidly, and with it his taste for drinking.

It was during these bouts, which Zep noticed were growing more and more frequent, he had latterly taken to ill-treating the girl if the receipts from the show fell short.

It was after such a dispute he had attacked her on the night that Dick interfered and saved the girl for once from his brutality.

Dick was astir by six o'clock, and after lighting his stove proceeded to get his breakfast.

The meal being dispatched, he cleaned up his van and went out to give Blinkers a feed and a rub down.

Several of the showmen were already at work, packing up their

props and making ready for the road.

He glanced at the next van, but there was no sign of Zep or her father, who he supposed was still sleeping off his debauch of the previous night. All being ready, he harnessed the horse and drove off through the town. Buying some provisions on his way he decided to follow the Belford road and make for Torminster.

Strolling leisurely along by the side of the van he soon covered some miles and left Wimboro some distance behind him. After completing another couple of miles he pulled up the horse to give him a rest, and sitting down on the bank by the roadside proceeded to fill his pipe.

A light footstep coming along the lane attracted his attention, and he looked up to see Zep approaching.

He eyed the girl curiously as she came closer, and noticed that her footsteps lagged and got slower as she drew towards him.

"Hulloa, Zep!" he exclaimed, in astonishment, as she stood in front of him with flushed cheeks and downcast eyes, "What brings you here?"

"I wanted to come with you," replied the girl in a low voice.

Dick stared at her with greater astonishment than before.

"With me?" he echoed.

"Yes," said Zep simply, as she raised her eyes which he noticed were wet with tears. "You saved me from him last night, and you are the only one who has ever been kind to me."

"And so you mean to say you have run away from your father?" asked Dick.

The girl nodded her head in reply.

"Won't yer let me come with yer?" she pleaded. "I'll work for yer and keep your van tidy and cook your meals. Don't send me away please, Perfessur," she cried, appealingly.

Dick was touched by the girl's appeal, but felt the situation was somewhat embarrassing and puffed thoughtfully at his pipe for a few moments in silence.

"But Zep," he said, gently, "think what you're doing. I'm afraid I cannot take you, and your father will certainly come and try and take you back."

"I won't go with him," cried the girl, vehemently, her eyes blazing with anger. "I've kept him these three years, but he drinks all I earn, and he treats me like a dog. I'll kill myself I will,

if you send me back to him. There!" and she burst into a flood of tears and sobbed pitifully. Dick began to feel very uncomfortable and blamed himself for being a hard-hearted wretch. Like most men he hated to see a woman in tears.

"There, there!" he said soothingly, as if to a child, and getting up took hold of the girl's hand.

"Don't cry, Zep. Come and sit down here and we'll see what can be done."

They sat down on the bank together, and "Rip," stood before them wagging his stumpy tail and barking, as if to say "This is a queer go."

"You see, Zep," remarked Dick, presently as the girl's sobs grew quieter, "the position is rather an awkward one."

He tried to explain as simply as he could.

"What would people say, if a man like me took a young girl about with him and he was not married to her? Do you understand?"

"I don't care what people may say," sobbed Zep. "I don't want to marry yer, I don't. I only wants to work for yer, and work I will my fingers to the bone for yer."

"But, Zep, my good girl, think of yourself."

"I don't want to think of myself, I'm nobody. I only wants to be with you, that's all."

Dick sighed at the utter futility of attempting to make her see the awkwardness of the case.

"Well, at any rate, let's have something to eat, you must be hungry," he cried, at length, in desperation, as he jumped up glad to shelve the question for a time.

"Let me get it, please," cried Zep, and she was off like a shot to the van.

"I know where yer keep the things," she called out as she skipped up the ladder and disappeared within, while "Rip" followed her.

Dick thought he would leave her to it and paced up and down the lane trying to think meanwhile what was best to be done.

He had always liked the girl for her cheery, bright manner and looks, but he was far from being in love with her. The construction that would be put on his conduct by others if he allowed her to travel with him was very apparent. Not that he cared now, a straw for what anyone might say. But he felt he

would be culpable indeed to take advantage of the girl's primitive simplicity, for simplicity he felt convinced it was on her part.

"What was to be done?" he asked himself for the twentieth time.

If he insisted on her going back, he knew from her passionate nature she would be quite capable of carrying out her threat to destroy herself. There would be no harm in letting her go with him as far as Torminster, and perhaps by that time he would find some way of convincing her, that her best course was to return to her father.

His further cogitations were cut short by a shout from Zep, who was standing at the door of the van.

"It's all ready," she cried. "Come along."

Dick entered the van to find a tempting meal laid on a white cloth that covered one of the lockers. There were several nicely fried rashers of ham, plenty of eggs, a loaf, butter and cheese ready set out by Zep's deft hands.

He noticed she had only laid a plate and knife and fork for one.

"Where is your plate, Zep?" he asked.

"Oh, never mind me. I will wait till you finish," said the girl, as she turned to lift the kettle from the stove to make a jug of coffee.

"Nonsense," cried Dick, as he got down another plate from the shelf. "Let us go and eat it outside. We shall have more room there."

And so they carried their plates and cups out with them, and seated on the bank, midst the wild-flowers, ate their repast.

When they had finished up the meal with bread and cheese, and "Rip" had had his share, Zep quickly collected the crockery and bringing a bowl of hot water from the van, rolled up her sleeves and proceeded to wash up, while Dick lit his pipe and lay back on the grass and looked on.

How quick in her movements she was he thought to himself.

After all, it was very nice to have someone to get a meal ready and especially to "wash up," a process he had always abhorred. Zep was apparently quite happy, for she said nothing, but hummed a tune as she wiped the plates and took them back into the van.

When the work was done she came and sat down on the bank beside him.

After some minutes she at last broke the silence.

"You won't send me away, will yer, Perfessur?" she asked in a pleading voice, looking up at him.

Dick looked at her and sighed.

"I don't know what to do," he said at length.

"Anyway, you shall come with me as far as Torminster and then we'll see what is best to be done."

Zep said nothing, but seized his hand and pressed it to her lips.

CHAPTER X

THE sun was tinting the western sky and edging the clouds with crimson and gold as the caravan approached Torminster.

Zep was perched on one of the shafts whistling a lively air, while Dick tramped by the side with the dog at his heels. He had decided not to enter the town, but encamp for the night outside, as soon as he could find a suitable spot.

Zep's fate was still undecided, yet he felt he could not abandon the girl.

"You see, Zep," he had said in conclusion of their last discussion on the question, "if you were only a boy it wouldn't matter at all. I wouldn't think twice about keeping you altogether."

Zep made no reply. She thought it a slur on her capabilities that she couldn't do everything a boy could.

They were close to the outskirts of Torminster when Dick noticed a quiet narrow lane

running off the main road, and reconnoitring, thought it would be a suitable place to camp for the night.

Turning the horse down the lane, they came across a nice piece of soft turf that looked suitable, and pulling up, he unharnessed Blinkers and turned him off to crop the grass. Zep insisted on helping, and proved as useful in looking after the horse as she had been in the culinary arrangements, and Dick found he had little to do.

After they had had another meal, he thought he would walk into the town to see if he could find a lodging for the girl, and he could then take her there and see her safe for the night.

Telling her he would be back in about an hour, he set off in the direction of the town.

It took him some time before he found a suitable place. After making inquiries he was at length recommended to an old woman

who kept a little sweet shop, who said she would let him have a room for the night. He explained it was for a young lady whom he would bring presently, and set off on his return to the van.

It was quite dark when he arrived there and was greeted with a bark from Rip whom he had left behind. His lamp shone from the little window, and he opened the door expecting to find Zep inside, but the van was empty. He peered into the inner compartment, but there was no trace of the girl. He went outside the van and called her name, thinking that perhaps she had strolled a little way off, but there was no reply.

What had become of her, he wondered? He asked Rip, but that sagacious animal only frolicked about and ran some distance up the lane, as if to show his master the way.

Perhaps she had gone altogether and so solved the difficulty. Then he thought what a brute he had been, and began to wish he had told her she might stay—yet what could he have done? It would have been awkward to have had a girl always with him, although she had proved dis-

tinctly useful. The matter was altogether most perplexing.

And so he stood for some time lost in thought at the door of the van, looking at the stars that studded the sky overhead. All around was quiet and peaceful, and leaving the door open he at length turned and went inside.

Ensconcing himself in the most comfortable seat he possessed, he pulled a newspaper from his pocket which he had bought in the town and commenced to scan its columns. Half an hour went by when he heard a footstep outside, and as he turned his head in the direction of the door he was surprised to see a youth climb the steps. He was clad in a dark blue suit with a reefer jacket and a tweed cap. The lad's face was familiar to him, and yet—

"It's only me, Perfessur," said the newcomer, with a smile, "Don't look so surprised."

"Zep!" he exclaimed, throwing down his paper and jumping up.

The girl broke into a merry laugh.

"And yer didn't know me? Why you look as if you'd seen a ghost," she cried.

Dick could not forbear laughing too, as he pulled her forward under the lamp.

"Whatever have you been up to," he cried, as she took off her cap and disclosed her curly hair cropped quite short.

"Well, you said if I had only been a boy you wouldn't mind me staying, so I went into the town and bought some clothes and here I am," she replied, her eyes twinkling with merriment. 'I've sold my other things so I'm a boy now," she added, as Dick eyed her from top to toe.

"And a good looking lad you make," said Dick, laughing again.

"You won't send me away now, will yer?"

"No, I'll be hanged if I will," cried Dick. "You shall stay as long as you like."

Zep expressed her delight by standing on her head.

"You see," she said when she regained her equilibrium, "I shall still be Zep to you, and I can do my turn at the fairs with another name, so no one will know me."

"That is a good idea," remarked Dick.

"And now for supper, after which I will take you along to the town to show you where I have taken a room for you for the night."

"Oh, but why can't I sleep here?"

"Well, you see—" began Dick, hesitatingly.

"You have two rooms. Can't I have one and you the other?" she broke in.

"But I thought—"

"Look here, Perfessur," Zep exclaimed. "You've give me leave to stay, and I'm with yer all through. You're the boss and I'm the boy. What is there against us both sleeping in the van. I wont keep yer awake I promise, or if yer like I'll sleep outside. I aint perticler."

"If you are bent on it then I suppose you must. You shall sleep in there," said Dick, at length, pointing to the inner compartment. "I can easily make a berth here."

"Now, that's real good of yer," exclaimed Zep, as she busied about getting the supper.

Dick watched her in silence. Womanlike, she had got her way and was happy. It seemed strange to him after having led a solitary life for so many months, to have anyone about him, but Zep had soon made herself at home, and was evidently quite satisfied with the situation.

"Now, Zep," said Dick, when

they had finished their meal, "you must be tired out. You'd better turn in, while I go and look after Blinkers and fix him up for the night.

"Right you are, Perfessur."

"And, Zep," continued Dick, "you mustn't call me Perfessur,"

"What then," she asked, with a comical look on her face. "You must call me Dick."

"All right. Good night, Dick, and God bless yer."

Dick drew the curtains across the van and went outside to look after the horse. After giving him a feed and tethering him safely, he filled his pipe and sat on the steps of the van and enjoyed a smoke.

A distant clock had chimed the hour of eleven before he knocked the ashes from his pipe and re-entered the van. There was no sound and the lamp was out. He lighted a candle, and

sat down on the edge of his berth, after making it ready for the night. He felt restless and strangely excited. His heart beat rapidly and he felt little inclination for sleep. After a while he rose softly and taking the candle in one hand he took a step towards the inner apartment. He drew back the curtain gently and looked in.

The girl lay stretched on the bed asleep, one arm thrown above her head and her lips slightly parted in a smile. The woollen shirt she had donned was open at the neck and her bosom rose and fell, as she slept as peacefully as a child.

He felt the hot blood coursing through his veins yet he did not stir. She had trusted him.

Dropping the curtain gently he blew out the light, then rolling a blanket round him, he threw himself down on his berth.

CHAPTER XI

STRIKING across country by easy stages, Dick gave his first performance with his new partner at Abingdon, after which they journeyed on to the great fair of St. Giles at Bulford.

The long cornmarket in the old city was thronged with shows of every description when Dick piloted his caravan along the street, and eventually found a pitch in a quieter part at the far end. He found they had as neighbour on one side, a celebrated "freak" known as "Marie Estelle," the two-headed phenomenon, and on the other, the famous Madame Jubber, "the fattest woman on earth," who according to her picture displayed outside her van, "turned the scale at forty-two stone." The proprietor of the latter show, one Gamlin by name, was a tall attenuated man with a deep bass voice, who, garbed in a seedy frock-coat, that had once been black, and old top hat, was

standing outside when Dick arrived.

"Good-day to you, Professor," he cried, as Dick drew up. "Where do you hail from?"

"Only from Abingdon," replied Dick. He had met the man at other fairs from time to time.

"How is business?" asked Dick, as he proceeded to unharness the horse.

"Only pretty middling. There is a darn sight too much competition now in my line. There's no less than four fat uns showing here. It's disgustin'. They seem to breed 'em in these parts," replied the proprietor of the "fat lady" with a deep sigh.

"But there is this about it," he continued, "they can't beat my old woman for weight. Do you know she's put on six pun in the last month."

"You don't say so," remarked Dick, drily.

"I do, and don't you forget it,

and what do you think that's done it?"

"I don't know I'm sure."

"Hysters and stout. That's what it is. Hysters and stout. Nothing else!"

"I should keep it up."

"I'm going to, sonny, you bet. Why she fairly lives on em—she does. By the way," he added, in an undertone. "It's her birthday to-day and we're expectin' a few friends after the show, all professionals you know, at ten o'clock. Will you jine us and come in and drink 'er health? Do now."

"It's very kind of you," said Dick, hesitatingly.

"Nonsense. You both come and welcome," said Gamlin, as he disappeared within.

For the next half hour, Dick and Zep were absorbed in preparations for the evening. He had had a new sign painted on which Zep was described as "Zaraxa" the greatest tumbler of the age.

Dick had also worked up some new tricks in which Zep assisted him, and their "thought-reading" interlude, always drew a big crowd. In the larger fairs he now hired a tent and so was able to get a larger audience.

By seven o'clock the fair was crowded, and each showman vied with the other in drawing in the people.

While Zep gave a "turn," Dick looked after the audience, likewise when his performance came on, she took round the hat. At the close of the day's work he had insisted on equally dividing the takings, and handed her one half of the proceeds.

Most of the performances were over for the night; lights were being extinguished and revellers were turning their faces homeward, when Dick and Zep having fixed up their show and changed their attire, made their way into their neighbour's tent. At the door they were received effusively by Mr. Gamlin, who in his deepest tones bade them enter. At the end of the tent, seated in a chair of immense size and partly resting on another, was the huge form of Mrs. Jubber, who claimed to be the "fattest woman on earth." Arrayed in a gown of orange-coloured satin with a low cut bodice, which showed her elephantine proportions to the utmost. She sat immovable, a veritable mountain of flesh.

"Permit me to present you,"

said Mr. Gamlin, solemnly, with a profound bow.

"Madame Jubber—Professor Devlin and Mr. Zaraxa."

An expansive smile spread over the stout lady's features as she slowly extended her hand, which Dick did his best to grasp.

"Delighted," she murmured.

They were introduced to several of the other guests who had assembled, including a gentleman professionally known as the "Cat-faced man," who sat conversing with a "bearded" lady.

On the table which was formed by a couple of planks resting on trestles, near where the fat lady was seated, a number of bottles of ale and stout, several plates of oysters and winkles, a loaf of bread and some cheese were set out.

"Ha, here they are at last," exclaimed Mr. Gamlin, in an interval of the conversation, as he strode across the tent to the entrance, as two young ladies (or what seemed to be two) entered, who appeared to be walking side by side enveloped in a large shawl.

"Permit me to introduce you," said Mr. Gamlin again, as he led them forward.

They saluted Mrs. Jubber on

each cheek simultaneously, and the mystery was explained when they removed their shawl for it became apparent, that although they had two heads and two arms, their bodies were joined at the shoulders.

"The Misses Marie Estelle," announced Mr. Gamlin.

The company bowed and the two-headed phenomenon did likewise, and then sat down next to Dick.

Other celebrities followed in the person of the "elastic-skinned man" who came with his friend, Herr Brunn, a gentleman who swallowed swords and ate fire as an every-day occurrence.

Dick, desirous of making himself agreeable, passed a remark about the sultriness of the weather to the head of the phenomenon that was nearest to him, but was completely puzzled what to say next, when both heads made a different reply. As the conversation flagged, however, Mr. Gamlin invited all to gather round the table and partake of refreshments, and soon the corks were popping merrily.

"I'm afraid we haven't enough tumblers to go round, gentlemen," he remarked, "but we have some teacups in the van."

The cups and glasses having been duly charged, the "cat-faced man," with a smile which illumined his feline features, rose and gave the toast of "long life and happiness to Mrs. Jubber, and may her shadow never grow less," he pertinently added.

The toast was duly honoured and the fat lady responded by nodding her head, while her face was wreathed in smiles. Then Mr. Gamlin cleared his throat to reply.

"On behalf of Madame Jubber," he said, "I thank you one and all, ladies and gentlemen, for your good wishes. It's nigh ten years come last Lady Day, that me and Madame Jubber began a touring the country. At that time she turned the scale at twenty-eight stone. Now she has outweighed all competitors and bends the beam at forty-two!"

Loud applause followed this announcement,

"We are both delighted to see such celebrities here to-night, and wish you all good business and good luck!"

"I pray you again to fill your glasses, and then try the winkles," cried Mr. Gamlin.

The company had now become more hilarious, and the "cat-faced man," made such grimaces on swallowing some of the shell fish recommended, that he sent the double-headed phenomenon off into shrieks of laughter.

Krakoffski, the Russian giant, expressed himself desirous of tripping a measure with Madame Jubber, but that lady declined with the excuse, that she was afraid that her "dancing days were over."

Dick asked Miss Marie who was next to him, if she would "partake of some more stout," but while she declined, Miss Estelle, the other head, replied she would, whereupon relations became somewhat strained for a few moments, until one half persuaded the other to partake also and so he replenished both glasses.

At length the bearded lady got up to go, as she remarked "the hour was getting late."

This was the beginning of a general exodus, and bidding adieux to Madame, who was nodding in her chair, one by one the guests betook themselves to their respective caravans.

CHAPTER XII

"How came you to be called Zep?" asked Dick one day, as they trudged along a country lane by the side of the caravan.

"Oh, that's short for Mazeppa," replied the girl with a laugh. "Mother used to play the part, years ago at Astley's old circus in the Westminster Bridge Road. I've heard father say she used to look lovely in her flesh tights with her golden hair all hanging down over her, when she was strapped on the back of the white horse, you know. So when I came, they called me Mazeppa after her favourite character, and then it got shortened to 'Zep.'"

They had been travelling through Lincolnshire, and the weather had been damp and trying.

For some days Dick had been feeling very unwell and thought he was perhaps suffering from a chill.

Evening was drawing in as they approached the old city of

Lincoln, and the towers of the cathedral, standing on the hill were silhouetted against the yellow sky like some giant sentinel keeping ward over the town below. They encamped about a mile from the city at the end of a quiet lane, as Dick felt he could go no further and must have a rest.

He lay down on his bed, for his limbs and back ached intolerably. While Zep busied about and prepared some tea. He had no recollection of ever feeling so ill before, and watching Zep in silence with half closed eyes, he at length fell into a kind of doze.

Zep began to feel anxious, and after some time aroused him sufficiently to swallow a little tea, after which he relapsed into a heavy sleep. Night had come on and with it rain commenced falling heavily.

Going out to see if Blinkers, the horse, was under cover, Zep

returned to the van to light the lamp, and taking up a newspaper, seated herself near Dick to read and watch. The drip, drip of the rain outside sounded dismal and drear, and she shivered as with some evil foreboding as she glanced at Dick. His face was flushed and he was breathing heavily. She had thrown a thick rug over him and putting her hand on his forehead, she felt he was in a burning fever.

Then, after a while, his mind began to wander, and in rambling sentences he commenced to repeat some of the incidents of the day.

Zep watched him with anxious eyes. She had no experience of sickness, but she had an innate consciousness that Dick was very ill.

What should she do? she asked herself.

An hour went slowly by and she thought she had better try and rouse him, but this she could only do with difficulty.

"Dick! Dick!" she called gently in his ear. "Speak to me. Are you feeling any better?"

She roused him sufficiently to open his eyes.

"Can I get you anything?" she asked, as he looked around in a dazed fashion.

"A drink, Zep," he murmured, hoarsely, as if his throat was parched.

She gave him a little cold tea which he swallowed greedily and then relapsed again into a troubled sleep.

The delirium seemed to be increasing as Zep still sat by and watched.

Then the thought suddenly struck her, what if he should die? She had done nothing and had got no help. She must go and find a doctor. The city was not far away and he could come to no harm while she went. So leaving Rip curled up at his master's feet, she set off at a smart pace in the drenching rain, down the dark road in the direction of the city.

First walking, then running, she soon reached the outskirts. Passing a number of large detached houses that stood far back from the road, she came to a long street that seemed to lead direct into the town.

The wet pavement glistened under the gas lamps as she hastened on, keeping a look out for a brass plate or a lamp that

would denote the house of a doctor.

Further on, at the corner of a street, she saw a policeman standing, his oilskin cape shining under the light from a lamp.

She hurried towards him.

"Please can you tell me if a doctor lives about here," she asked, breathlessly.

The constable eyed her stolidly up and down.

"A doctor, my lad," he replied, slowly. "Aye there is one lives yonder, about six doors down on the opposite side."

With a word of thanks, Zep ran across the road and soon discovered a house with a brass-plate on the gate, bearing the name of Dr. Brenton.

She pulled the bell and in a few minutes a maid opened the door.

"Is the doctor in?" asked Zep, anxiously.

"Yes, will you step inside, please."

Zep entered and followed the girl through the hall into a small bare waiting room.

"What name," asked the maid.

"Oh, he wont know my name," replied Zep, with some confusion; "only tell him I want him to

come quick, please, to some one who is very ill."

Zep paced the room impatiently when the girl had closed the door; her coat, which was saturated with the rain, steaming in the warm room.

Slowly the minutes went by, then she heard a footstep outside and the door opened, and a little man with a bald head and grey side-whiskers entered.

He scanned Zep over his spectacles as he asked what she wanted.

"Oh, sir, will you please come and see the 'Professor' who is very ill," she blurted out.

"The Professor!" echoed the doctor. "What Professor?"

"Why, Professor Devlin, sir," replied Zep, with a look of astonishment that he should never have heard of such a distinguished personage.

"And who may Professor Devlin be? And where does he live?"

"Oh, he lives in the caravan."

"The caravan?" queried the doctor, looking more puzzled than ever. "Is he a gypsy, then?"

"No, sir, only a conjurer."

"I see, a showman, eh? But what is the matter?"

"I don't know, sir, only he was

taken ill to-day and is asleep all the time and talking wild like."

"And you want me to come with you. Is that it?"

"Yes, if you please, sir," replied Zep, gratefully.

"Very well. Wait here while I get my boots and mackintosh on, and I will come."

In a few minutes Zep and the doctor were hurrying along the road in the rain.

"And how far is this caravan?" asked the doctor, after they had tramped about a mile.

"Oh, it's not far now, sir, only down the next lane to the right and we shall be there."

"Look here, my good lad," said the doctor, stopping suspiciously as they splashed through the mud in the dark into a narrow lane with no lights, that turned off the main road.

"Are you sure you're leading me right?"

"It's all right, sir, believe me," replied Zep; "There is the van," she cried as she pointed to a glimmering light by the road side.

In a few minutes they reached it, and climbing the steps Zep opened the door.

Dick was still as she had left him and murmuring incoherently as they entered.

The doctor threw off his mackintosh and sat down to examine him, questioning Zep meanwhile. After taking his temperature, feeling his pulse and tapping his chest, he asked Zep for a cup with a little water, then taking a little leather case from his pocket he selected a tube, and took from it a tablet which he dissolved in the water.

"You must rouse him presently and make him swallow this," he said, as he handed the cup back to Zep.

"This man is ill and is probably suffering from enteric fever," he continued, "I will have him removed to hospital to-morrow."

"Oh, sir!" cried Zep, "cannot I keep him here?"

"No, my lad, this place isn't suitable for a fever case. I will notify it to the proper authorities and they will send an ambulance for him to-morrow. Give him nothing but milk and a little soda water, if you can get it."

"Thank you, sir," said Zep, as she hastened to get out her purse.

"No, no," said the doctor kindly, as he noticed her action. "Not now, you can settle with me later when we get him away. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir, and many thanks to yer," said Zep, as she saw him safely down the steps into the lane.

Closing the door she sat down on a stool by Dick's side and resting her head on her hands tried to think.

She had no idea what enteric fever was, but she made up her mind they should not take Dick away. He should have all the milk he wanted, and she would nurse him, but take him away to a hospital, which to her mind was little better than a gaol, they should not, and she clenched her fists in her resolve.

"Dick," she called gently, as she shook his shoulder.

"Dick !"

He moved uneasily and then slowly opened his eyes.

"What's the matter, Zep ?" he asked, in a languid voice.

"Will you drink this, Dick ?" she said as she gave him the cup.

"What is it ?"

"Only a drink, 'cause you're very thirsty—arn't yer ?"

"Yes, awfully, and I am feeling so ill, Zep," he said, wearily, looking at her with bloodshot eyes.

"You'll be better by the morning, Dick. I'll stay here with you all night, and see if you want anything," she said, as she took the cup from him.

Then he turned over on his side and lapsed into sleep again.

CHAPTER XIII

ALTHOUGH Zep had kept vigil all night by Dick's bedside she was out at daybreak, and after feeding the horse had run off to the nearest farm to procure a supply of milk. Her great anxiety was to get the caravan away as soon as possible, and before they could send anyone from the city to take Dick away to the hospital. She was determined that no one should take him from her, and that she alone should nurse him back to health.

By the time she returned to the van, she found he was awake and though the fever had diminished, yet he was so weak he could not stand up.

"Now look here, Dick," she exclaimed, "you've got to lay down, as the doctor said you were ill."

"Doctor?" asked Dick, languidly, "What doctor?"

"Well, you was so bad last night, I went and fetched one. You don't remember?"

"He said you had 'eretick' fever, and you was to just lie on yer back, and have nothing but milk until they sent to fetch you to the 'orspital."

"Hospital? What hospital?"

"I don't know and wot's more I don't care; but they're not agoin' to take yer, if I can help it, and by the time they come we'll have scooted."

Dick smiled faintly.

"No, I don't want to go into any hospital, Zep, if we can manage. I'll be all right in a day or two I dare say."

"That's all right. You just take a good drink of this milk, and lie on your back again and we'll get off."

Dick felt too weak to argue the point,—and was glad to lie back in his bed again, while Zep tucked the rug around him and then went outside.

In a short time he felt the van moving, and knew they were on the road. The jolting kept him

awake for a long time. At length Zep pulled up the horse and put her head inside the door to see if he was all right.

"Well, we've put a good four mile between us and Lincoln," she said, cheerily, "and now I'll get breakfast."

She bustled about the van and soon had some hot milk ready for Dick, and a meal for herself.

"I'll tell yer what I'm going to do," she remarked as she drank her coffee. "I know these parts well, as I travelled all round here with the old man a year or two ago. I'll make for Wraxburn. It's only about ten miles away and is a quiet little place. I know a spot near a farmhouse that will just do for a bit. Will that suit yer, Dick?"

Dick nodded his head in acquiescence. She had taken his reins and he felt he didn't care where he went just then. "Well that's settled," said Zep, with a nod of satisfaction.

"Now just yer get off to sleep while I wash up, and then we'll be off again."

As Zep moved about as noiselessly as she could, Dick gradually dozed off, and before she had finished her work he was asleep.

She lost no time in continuing the journey, and by the afternoon Wraxburn was reached. Zep found a suitable place to encamp near the farmhouse she had recollected, and as soon as she had unharnessed and fed Blinkers she made her way to the farm to get a fresh supply of milk.

When that was done, there were provisions and oil to be bought from the village, so that she found every moment occupied.

Fortunately she had saved a few pounds, that she hoped would last until Dick was well again, but if the money ran short, she knew if it came to the worst, she could always bring in a few shillings by giving a performance now and again.

Towards evening Dick again grew delirious, and Zep seated on a low stool sat by his side and watched him with anxious face, moistening his parched lips from time to time with a little cold tea.

Sometimes he would imagine he was giving his "show," and would chatter on as if addressing an audience; then he would call out names Zep had never heard before. One in particular he continually mentioned, some-

times in tones of pleading and at others as if upbraiding.

"Madge! Do come, just as far as the lock," he would cry aloud. And then in tones of reproach.

"I thought you loved me— You don't! It's all money, money!"

Zep began to wonder who Madge was, and what "money" had to do with it.

Dick had never told her anything of his past life. She knew he was a "gentleman" in looks and manner whatever clothes he wore, and was quite unlike the other showmen with whom she had come in contact. Thus these unconscious revelations of his earlier life excited her interest.

Night after night, as the fever ran its course, this went on, and in the day time he was generally too weak to speak or move.

Zep's frequent visits for milk to the little farm close by had roused the interest of Dame Bennion, the farmer's wife, a motherly woman of middle age.

She had watched Zep come to and fro across the field with her can for her daily supply, while she left Rip in care of the caravan.

"Ye seem to drink a power of milk down there in your cart, my lad," she remarked one day, as she handed Zep her "can" re-filled with a fresh supply.

"I warrant ye don't drink it all yerself," she rambled on, "My mon was assaying the other night yer moight be a keepin' a lot of babies or calves, eh?"

"Nay, we've neither got babies nor calves," replied Zep with a smile. "It's for a sick man."

"Sick is he, poor chap," said the motherly old dame, placing her hands on her hips, "and he in an old covered cart by the roadside, dearie me! Well, here's yer milk, my lad, and I hope's as he'll be better soon."

Several days went by and Zep was busy one morning putting the van tidy, when she heard a voice exclaim—

"And how is the sick man?"

Turning her head she saw it was Mrs. Bennion.

"He is just about the same, thank yer," she replied.

"I was a going to the village, and I thought I'd come and see loike how he was."

"Thank you," said Dick himself, "but won't you come in?"

The old woman impelled by

curiosity mounted the steps and put her head inside the door.

"Well, I never!" she exclaimed as she looked round the neat interior. "Why it's as com'ful a covered cart as ever I seed. And to think ye live here—dearie me. But you look mayn poorly," she continued to Dick.

Dick smiled wanly in reply, for he felt it.

"I'm thinking it's a sup of good food ye want to make ye strong, my mon."

"You see the doctor said I was to give him nothing but milk for a bit," explained Zep.

"That's all very well, my lad. Milk's good enough for babies and childer, but this young feller wants summat to pick him up loike."

"Now my young nevvie, Billy, was just loike him, believe me, after he had what they call a low fever, and he was as weak as a kitten. So I took him in hand, killed a good fat capon and biled and stewed him down, till it was all quite in a jelly. Then I took and fed him on it, and the change in him was wonderful. He was soon on his feet again."

"But yer can't do it in this bit of a box," continued Mrs. Bennion

looking at the little oil stove, somewhat contemptuously.

"Yer wait till to-morrow and I'll bring you some. And now I must be off."

"Oh, thank yer," said Zep, gratefully, as she assisted the old dame down the steps again.

True to her promise, the next day Mrs. Bennion arrived with a jar, carefully wrapped up in a clean white cloth, which she handed to Zep.

"Now you give him this," she said. "I stewed it down meself and I knows it's good."

Zep thanked her most gratefully and wanted to pay for it, but the good hearted old dame would not hear of accepting any money.

A few days made a great change in Dick, for the fever had run its course and gradually left him altogether. Whether it was due to Mrs. Bennion's capon jelly or his strong constitution it matters not—although the old woman and Zep strongly declared his improvement was due to the former—he seemed to gain strength every day, until he was at last able to get about again. The first walk he took was across the foot-path and through the field to see Mrs. Bennion, and thank her for her kindness.

"I told ye, yer would soon be well again," cried the old dame when she saw him. "These ere doctors think they know a lot better than anyone else, but they're not always right," she said, as she winked her eye solemnly.

Dick was none the less grateful to Zep, who had nursed and tended to him so devotedly. What he would have done without her he did now know.

"Zep," he said to her one evening when they were sitting in the lamplight, "I've never yet thanked you for nursing and looking after me while I was so ill."

"I want no thankin'," replied the girl, simply, "I always said

I'd look after yer and the van, when yer let me come with yer. It's nothing."

"Yes, but it is a good deal, and I know you've nursed me night and day. But for you I don't know where I would have been. I must work now and repay you, for our money is getting low," said Dick.

"We're partners and what's mine is yours," said Zep, smiling. "I've still got $3/3\frac{1}{2}$ left."

"And I've two pounds," said Dick.

"We'll start to-morrow, and make for Rippington. There is a fair held there about this time, and there'll be a chance to do some business, for we need it."

CHAPTER XIV

SINCE his recovery from his illness a new feeling had sprung up in Dick for Zep. The girl's unselfish devotion to him had touched a fresh chord in his nature. His easy-going disposition with its usual reluctance to face responsibilities, had allowed him to drift into a somewhat extraordinary position.

After having given way to the girl's request to accompany him when she had removed the outward appearance of her sex by donning male attire, he had allowed matters to drift.

As time went on, he seemed to forget her femininity and lived in that real spirit of comradeship with her, as if she had indeed been a man. Hitherto no feeling of sex had entered into their relationship. The girl was of a curiously simple nature, and in spite of her former environment she had remained undefiled.

But lately Dick had become imbued with the idea that he

would like to see her in feminine garb once more. He noticed she had much improved in face and manner, and was anxious to learn all he would tell her.

He felt he would like to educate her in his own way.

"Zep," he remarked one day as they were sitting on a bank by the roadside, while old Blinkers rested awhile. "Don't you think it would be well if you gave up wearing men's clothes now, and took to skirts again?"

"Why?" asked the girl, with a look of astonishment, as she turned her wide open eyes upon him. "You always said that if I was a boy you wouldn't mind me travelling with you, and now you want to turn me into a girl again."

"But I never told you to do it," said Dick, smiling, "and perhaps it was wrong of me to let you. You see, Zep, you are a woman now, and it might be very

awkward for you later on to be always masquerading as a man."

"Well, I don't see why I shouldn't wear trousers if I like. They are much better than floppy skirts for our business. Besides nobody has ever found it out. Have they?"

"No, that's true. It is not the question of comfort I was thinking of but your future. Suppose, for instance, you were to fall in love with a man some day and wanted to marry him?"

"Want to marry?" broke in Zep, with a laugh, "and what would I want to get married for?"

This was somewhat of a poser for Dick, and he reflected a little before he replied—

"Well, you see," he said at length, "you might want to settle down and live in a house, and have a husband to look after."

"Now look here, Dick, what are you getting at? I don't want to marry no fellow, nor is it likely I want to live in a brick box with a slate lid, after living in a caravan. All as I wants is to look after your van, and keep it tidy for yer. I don't want no husband, as long as I can twist a leg and turn a somersault."

"Yes, but then you may not be able to stay with me always," ventured Dick.

Zep's face clouded at once.

"Are yer thinking of retiring from the bizness?" she asked seriously.

"No, hardly that."

"Well, look here, Perfessur, when you're tired of me and yer find I am a bother to yer, you've only to say 'go,' and I'll scoot. I ain't dependent on yer, am I?"

"No, Zep, certainly not."

"I only want to work for yer cos you were kind to me, that's all, Dick." The girl's eyes moistened as she looked straight into his.

Dick put out his hand and pressed hers.

"Zep, you are a right good sort," he replied, simply. "You need not be afraid that I shall tell you to go after what you've done for me these past months. But, to please me, you must dress as other girls do, now," he added, persuasively.

"I don't mind, but I haven't any other clothes yer know," cried the girl, laughing. "I sold them when I bought these."

"Yes, I know, but the first town we come to, I'll buy you some."

"Well, we've got to make some money first, you know."

"Yes," said Dick, with a rueful smile, "that's true. The exchequer is decidedly low at present."

"I say, Dick," said Zep, thoughtfully, after a few minutes. "What was you before you became a 'Perfessur,' and took to the road?"

"Oh, I did nothing, Zep, but used to waste other people's time and my own."

"But you must have had some money to keep yer going?" asked the girl.

"Yes, I had a little money, but I threw it all away."

"Then, I guess yer was a fool. If I had a lot of money I wouldn't chuck it away. So you was a gentleman who lived on your means?"

"Yes, I suppose I was what you call a gentleman, Zep."

"I thought so," said Zep, thoughtfully again.

"Why did you think so?"

"Well, from the way you talked when yer was ill. You used to go quite dotty at nights, you know, and talk of 'going on the river,' and 'through the locks' and calling for someone called 'Madge'."

"Did I?" asked Dick, in astonishment.

"I s'pose she was your sister—this Madge?" said Zep, presently, with a little sigh, as she pulled the petals of a daisy she had pulled from the bank.

The action brought to Dick's mind a certain summer evening in a back water on the Thames, and the picture of a girl who had also pulled a flower to pieces, flashed before his eyes.

"No, she wasn't my sister," he said slowly, as he got up and stretched himself. "But it's time we were off again, or we shan't reach Rippington before night."

CHAPTER XV

IN a few weeks' time Dick had quite recovered his strength and felt his wonted self again. The simple life mainly spent in the open air had soon re-invigorated him, and at the close of a mild September day found the strollers at the little town of Halesworth at which a few shows had collected for the annual wakes.

It was a warm evening, and the soft air scarcely stirred the leaves of the fine old trees that stood around the green on which most of the shows had collected, although the stalls and booths extended down the old High Street and into the market place.

As darkness fell, the townsfolk shut up their shops and strolled out to enjoy themselves.

Zep had already given her exhibition several times, which had resulted in a good harvest of coins, and later on, Dick mounted the platform outside the caravan to give his performance. An appreciative audience soon

assembled, and after some ventriloquial items with a dummy figure, he proceeded to his sleight of hand experiments, which always mystified a rustic audience. He had extracted several eggs from the mouth of a stolid yokel who looked agape at him, and discovered live pigeons in the pockets of another, and had nearly come to the end of his programme, when his attention was attracted by a group consisting of two or three ladies and men who had joined the ring of spectators. They were evidently not of the townsfolk class, for they were in evening dress with light wraps protecting their heads and shoulders. Some visitors staying at the neighbouring hotel, he thought to himself as he observed them. Then as he presently glanced again in their direction in the uncertain light of the flare lamps, his eyes met those of a woman who was looking intently at him. He started

visibly as he recognised the face of Madge Bulstrode. He recovered himself with an effort, and proceeded with his next trick.

"Will any lady present be good enough to lend me a pocket-handkerchief," he cried.

Several hands were soon extended in response, holding out the desired article, but the one he selected was held aloft by a small white hand, the fingers of which were laden with rings.

"Thank you," he exclaimed, as he reached between the heads of the people, and seized it.

When he turned to step back on the platform crumpling the handkerchief in his hand, he became conscious that there was a small piece of folded paper concealed in it, which he quickly secreted in his waistcoat pocket.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," he continued as he faced the audience again, holding the handkerchief by two corners and shaking it before them. "You see I have here an ordinary pocket handkerchief, small in size truly, but possessing wonderful powers. I take it in my hand so (here he rolled it into a ball between the palms of his hands) and rub—and rub—and rub it so,

and see what it becomes. Here he shook out a tiny handkerchief about three inches square.

"But I have not yet done with this little bit of cambric. I take it between my hands and roll and roll it again and lo! it is yet smaller," he exclaimed, as he held between his thumb and finger, a tiny handkerchief about an inch square.

"There, madam," he exclaimed, as he held it out, "there is your handkerchief."

"What! You won't accept it, It is not yours, you say? Well. I must do my best to bring it to its right size again I suppose, if you won't have it."

He then proceeded to palm the tiny scrap of cambric in the same way again and eventually disclosed a handkerchief of the original size. Shaping this in the form of a cone, he next extracted from it yards and yards of coloured ribbons, and streamers of flowers which he tossed among the crowd, then at length made his final bow, giving the handkerchief to Zep to pass back to its owner.

As the tiny ring of people melted away, Dick turned to enter the caravan, but paused on the top step and looked around at

the group who were gradually disappearing up the road.

Yes, it was Madge, he was certain of it, and she had recognised him too.

He entered the van and felt for the slip of paper in his waistcoat pocket, and unfolding it under the lamp read the following words which were scrawled on it in pencil:—

“Recognised. Meet me in the Old Priory—10.30.

MADGE.”

He screwed the paper abstractedly in his fingers and threw it on the floor of the van, then pulling out his pipe filled it and smoked. What curious fate had led him to cross her path again he wondered. Then he recollected that Bulstrode’s country place was somewhere near Halesworth. That accounted for it, and they were doubtless staying there now he conjectured. What was the use of seeing her again he soliloquised. All that was over long ago. She had spoiled his life, and wasn’t worth troubling about. And so he continued to think of the old days they had spent together. He looked at his watch, it was just ten o’clock.

Should he go? No, he decided, it could do no good. She was the wife of another man. Yet she had asked for the interview and she had recognised him. He must bind her to secrecy, that was necessary. It was most unfortunate, but yes, he decided he must see her, if only to ask her to keep his secret.

Putting an old coat on, and taking his cap, he got up from his seat.

“Going out?” said Zep, who had just entered the van.

“Yes, going for a stroll. I won’t be very long,” he added, shortly, as he descended the steps and walked slowly across the green.

“Wonder where he is off to?” said Zep to herself, as she watched him depart. “Something’s put him out. He’s not himself to-night. He’s looked queer ever since that woman gave him her handkerchief.”

She hummed a tune, and sitting down looked round the van, when her eyes caught a little screwed up piece of paper lying near the stove. She picked it up and straightened it out, and slowly spelt out the words on the paper.

She read it slowly several

times, as if to gather their meaning.

At last something seemed to dawn upon her; as she sat her brows knitted in thought, and

she clenched her hands convulsively—then extinguishing the lamp she went outside closing and locking the door behind her.

CHAPTER XVI

DICK had visited Halesworth before, and knew the remains of the ruined Priory which stood a short distance from the village, in a meadow, near the banks of the river. It was in this direction he slowly bent his steps. The night was a dark one, and a slight mist was rising from the fields. A few minutes' walk brought him to a gate which gave access to a pathway leading to the ruin, the dark outline of which rose up black before him.

There was no one about apparently, and he sat down on a huge slab of stone to wait.

Presently the sound of a light footstep and the swish of skirts attracted his attention, and a woman's figure loomed through the mist.

She came towards him with outstretched hands which he grasped in his, and they stood face to face.

"Ronny," she exclaimed, her voice trembling with emotion.

"I knew I was not mistaken. And everyone thought you dead."

"So I am dead to all who knew me, Madge."

"But why? Oh, why did you do it? Ronny, it made me feel a murderess. I felt I had made you do it. And now, this has lifted a load from my heart," she sobbed almost hysterically, as she held his hands.

"Come let us sit here for a few minutes and I'll tell you," said Dick gently, as he drew her to the stone on which he had been sitting.

"You know the life I led, and the pace I went after you threw me over? Well, after my money had all but gone, I decided to end it all and intended to kill myself. By some strange chance I did not die. Then I determined to bury the past and my name with it, and start a new life, to earn my living the best way I could, untrammelled by society. I spent my last few

pounds in a horse and caravan, and here I am as you found me to-night, a strolling showman," he concluded with a smile.

"And you? Tell me of yourself—You married Bulstrode."

"Yes, I married him, as you know, at my mother's wish. Weak fool that I was, and bitterly I have repented it."

"Forgive me, Ronny," she sobbed, as she clung to him, "but seeing you again, like one who has risen from the dead, has unnerved me."

"Don't tell me more if it distresses you," said Dick, gently.

"Oh, it will do me good to tell you, above all—you, whose love I flung aside.

"For a few months all was well," she exclaimed, in a calmer voice. "I had everything that money could buy, and we lived in a round of continual pleasure. Then he began to grow tired of me and I found out certain things. I can't tell even you. But worst of all, Ronny, he drinks, and now since my mother died, my life is almost unbearable."

Dick felt a shudder pass through her body as she paused.

"He was not with you to-night?" he asked.

"No, he is in town, which he rarely leaves now. I invited a few people down to the Priory, as I feel I must have someone about me or I should go mad. This old ruins stands in the grounds of the Hall. To-night, after dinner, someone proposed we should go down and look at the fair for a joke, so we put on some wraps and strolled down to the green. We stopped and looked at one show and another, and then I thought I heard a voice I knew. I looked in the direction from whence it came, and saw you standing in the centre of a ring of people. I moved to join the throng and get nearer. I felt certain that I was not mistaken, and sure enough I recognised you in spite of your appearance.

"I was determined to speak to you, but how I did not know. Then I saw you look at me and start in amazement. I scrawled that note intending to leave it at your caravan, then the opportunity offered when you asked for the loan of a handkerchief, and I rolled the note in it. I knew you would take it. How strange it all is?"

"Aye, that it is."

"Listen!" cried Madge, in a

startled whisper, "did you hear that noise? I'm sure there is someone by that hedge."

"Nonsense," said Dick, as he jumped up and beat about the bushes with his stick. "There is no one there. Must have been a cat."

"Let us walk along the path," said Madge, when he returned, "I must not stay or I shall be missed. Sometimes I feel as if I must end it all."

"No, no, don't talk like that for heaven's sake."

"Oh, but you don't know. Have you no love left for me, Ronny? Not a spark of the old feeling you used to have," she said passionately, as she faced him and tried to meet his eyes.

"God knows I have and always shall have," said Dick, hoarsely, as he put his arms around her, "but what can I do to help you—you, the wife of another man."

"Take me away, Ronny. Take me out of this. I'll go with you to the world's end," she exclaimed eagerly, as she hid her face on his breast.

Dick felt her body quivering

against his as he strove to master the passion that was surging within him.

"I cannot, dear. I cannot wrong you. Think what it would mean—I am a penniless outcast. What could we do? It would be making you an outcast too. No, I cannot do it."

She clung to him sobbing passionately, as he strove to soothe her with what words he could command.

"Hush, dearest, try and be brave. We must live it out: who knows what the future may hold. Promise me you will try? And you will keep my secret, Madge? You alone hold it. Promise me."

"I promise," she murmured, as she looked up at him. "Kiss me once, Ronny. Just once more," she pleaded.

He drew her face to his and kissed her lips.

"Good-bye, dear; God keep you," he exclaimed, and as he freed her, she turned without a word, and walked swiftly along the path she had come.

CHAPTER XVII

DICK's thoughts were fully occupied with his strange meeting with Madge, as he retraced his steps towards the town. It had re-awakened all the memories of the past which he had long buried and tried to forget. What strange fate had brought her across his path again. He was disturbed by the discovery that his old love but lay dormant, and was not dead, yet he had withstood the temptation she had offered him. He resolutely tried to put it from his thoughts. He had set his feet on another path and would not go back.

The door of the caravan was partly open as he reached the steps, and he could see Zep seated in the lamplight with her head bowed, and her face hidden in her hands.

As he entered she raised her head, and he noticed that her eyes were wet with tears. From her look of agita-

tion she was evidently in trouble.

"Hallo, Zep, what is the matter?" he exclaimed, as he threw himself into a low chair facing the girl.

"Nothing," she replied, sullenly, as she got up suddenly. "Only that I'm going, that's all."

"Going?" echoed Dick, in astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"You won't want me no more now, so I'm just going, that's all," she cried, again, as she reached to get her cap from a peg.

"Come, Zep," said Dick, persuasively, as he took her by the arm. "What is troubling you? Why should I not want you any more? Tell me!"

"You have another girl now, and you won't want me. I saw you with her and you had your arms round her," she blurted out, vehemently.

"Nonsense, Zep. What are

you talking about," cried Dick, angrily.

"I tell yer I sawed yer both," she exclaimed, passionately, her face aflame.

"Saw me where?"

"In the ruins just now."

"What were you doing there?" asked Dick, sternly.

"I followed yer," replied Zep, looking abashed. "I saw her looking at yer in the crowd, and I found the paper on the floor and I followed yer."

"That was very wrong and deceitful of you, Zep, and you are mistaken," said Dick, sternly.

"Then yer don't want me to leave yer?" cried the girl, a look of relief crossing her face, as she stretched out her hands towards Dick.

"No. Not unless you wish to go, you foolish girl. You know you are free to go whenever you wish; but we have been good friends and comrades for a long time, Zep. You nursed me through that fever. I don't forget that. But you should not have spied upon me."

"Forgive me. Forgive me, Dick," pleaded the girl, bursting into tears. "I don't know what made me do it. I thought you meant to leave me, and I couldn't

bear it. I followed, not meaning to spy on you. Then I saw yer with that lady, and yer kissed her, Dick."

"Well, what of that. She was an old friend, and I had not seen her for a long time."

Zep shook her head sadly, as if unconvinced.

"Listen to me, Zep," said Dick, "You are a sensible girl, and we have lived in this van together for ever so many months. You shan't leave me, I shall marry you, and then you can't run away."

"No, no. Yer cannot mean that," she said, with agitation.

"Yes I do mean it if you will consent. Have you anything to say against it," said Dick, smiling as he put his arm round the girl and drew her towards him.

"Yes," said Zep, slowly. "I am not fit to be your wife. I am only an ignorant girl and you are a gentleman born, I know that. When I came I only wanted to wait on yer and look after your things; that was all, and I have been so happy," she added, pathetically.

"And you shall be happier still, Zep," said Dick, as he stooped and kissed her lightly on the forehead.

It was the first time he had ever kissed her or even shown her any real mark of affection, and a momentary thrill of delight passed through her body.

"No, Dick. You are only doing this for some purpose," she exclaimed. "Why cannot you let things be. I can serve you as well without being married as if I were your wife."

"Zep, Zep! Listen to me," said Dick, interrupting her, as he placed his arm around her. "I will not have you leave me. It is not right to you that I should let you live with me like this. I wonder do you love me. Do you, Zep?"

He felt the girl's body trembling, as she sank to the floor at his feet and clasped them with her arms and kissed them in her ecstasy.

"Yes, yes! I love you. I love you," she murmured, passionately.

Dick stooped and raised her gently and held her in his arms.

He felt unworthy of the girl's

devotion. No one had ever cared for him like this before. Her unselfish regard for his wants, and her cheery companionship during the months they had lived together all flashed through his mind.

What could he give her in return?

All he could do was to try and love her and make her happy.

That he would do. He had cast the die.

"Zep," he said softly. "You say you have been happy since you have been with me. I will try and make you happier still. I meant what I said just now. To-morrow we will go on to Brockhurst, where I will get a licence, and will be married at the village church."

Zep looked up into his face with a light in her eyes he had never seen before.

"As yer will, Dick. If you think it best I will marry yer, but whether we marry or not, I am yours body and soul."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE children coming out of the village school after their morning's task with shouts of glee and merry laughter, clustered round the door of the old church which stood partly open, an unusual occurrence at that time of day.

Looking up the aisle illuminated by the bright beams of the sun they could see a group of four people standing at the steps of the chancel.

In front of the old vicar in his white surplice, a man and a woman stood side by side, while a little to the left of the vicar was old Jacob Tolworth the sexton, with bent head and book in hand.

The murmur of the clergyman's voice soon ceased, and having closed his book, he walked towards the vestry followed by the others.

Dick and Zep were married, and in a few minutes they walked down the aisle, and out into the golden sunlight man and wife.

Some of the children had remained round the door, with childlike curiosity, interested in anything that happened in the church, be it a burial, a christening, or a marriage, concluded the latter ceremony had been taking place. Gathering some buttercups and daisies from the roadside, as Dick and his wife walked down the pathway to the lychgate, they scattered them in the way.

"It is a good omen," said Dick, smiling as he threw them some coppers, and Zep laughed aloud as little ones tumbled over one another in the dusty lane in the scramble that followed.

Together they strolled down the lane; Zep in a simple gown of grey and a white sailor hat, looking almost as boyish as when she was in male garb, while Dick in his old suit of homespun and cap lounged along at her side.

They followed the road towards the forest, near which they had left the caravan in charge of a

man for the day, for Dick determined to celebrate the event by a dinner of someone else's cooking.

He had ordered this repast at the "Rose and Crown," an old country inn, which they reached after a few minutes' walk. They were shown into the coffee room by an aged waiter, where they found a little table had been laid for them near the window overlooking an old-fashioned garden, with clipped hedges of box and quaint arbours. Zep, overawed at the surroundings, and unaccustomed to a large room, sat on the edge of her chair looking awkward and uncomfortable. She had suddenly become very quiet, and Dick did his best to make her feel at ease but without success.

The entrance of two smartly dressed girls, who seated themselves at a table close by, did not tend to improve matters, for they stared at poor Zep which made her feel still more embarrassed.

Dick found himself contrasting the self-possession and manners of these girls with those of his wife sitting opposite to him, who with elbows outspread was eating her fish with a steel knife.

Then he thought of her unselfishness and devotion and begun to feel ashamed of him-

self. It should be his task to teach and educate her.

"You don't look happy, Zep," he remarked with a smile, as the waiter disappeared for a few minutes to serve the second course.

"I wish you'd tell that old bloke to keep away," whispered Zep across the table. "He watches everything I eat."

"Oh, he only wants to look after us and see we have all we want," replied Dick, laughing.

"I don't like it," said Zep, again in an undertone, as she glanced towards their neighbours at the next table. They were chatting gaily and showing evident signs of amusement which she imagined she was the cause.

"I don't want any more, Dick, I don't really," she said, as the old waiter again appeared with a dish of cutlets.

"Nonsense," said Dick, as he helped her to a portion. "This is our wedding breakfast you know, and I want you to enjoy it."

"I don't like it half so well as having our dinner in the van," replied Zep, as she bent her head over her plate.

"Those girls are laughing at me I know. If I had them out-

side I'd give them something to laugh for," she added savagely, under her breath.

Dick looked at her somewhat amazed.

This phase of her character was quite new to him, and he didn't know how to meet it. He made no reply, but having quickly finished the meal, he paid the bill and rose to leave, much to Zep's relief.

They wandered down the lane and were soon in the leafy glades of the forest. For the first time since they had been together, Dick felt there was a feeling of restraint between them.

"What is the matter with you to-day, Zep?" he said at length, as he puffed at his pipe contemplatively.

"Nothing as I know of," replied Zep, shortly.

"Oh, but there is. You are not a bit like yourself. And what made you so queer at that inn just now?"

"Was I queer?"

"Yes. You didn't seem happy or comfortable."

"I dunno what it was. I'm sorry, Dick, if I shamed yer, but yer oughtn't to have married me. I told yer yer oughtn't."

"What makes you say that?"

"Oh, don't think because I'm only a common girl I don't know. I'm not one of your sort, Dick. I felt as if you were ashamed of me."

"But you musn't feel like that, Zep," said Dick gently, as he placed his hand over hers. "I am not ashamed of you and will soon teach you to feel at ease wherever you may be."

"It's not a bit of use, Dick, you'll never make a fine lady of me. I'm good enough to wait on yer and look after your things in the van, but don't take me out to those places again," she said, almost piteously, and her eyes filled with tears.

"My dear girl, I won't take you anywhere if it will distress you, you may be sure," replied Dick, soothingly, and Zep raised his hand to her lips and kissed it passionately.

CHAPTER XIX

LYMERTON FAIR generally draws a crowd of country folk from far and near. Some come thither for business, such as the hiring of farm hands, while others are attracted by the shows and come to enjoy the fun.

Among the many strollers who had taken up a pitch on the ground, were Dick and Zep, who had made an easy journey from Brockhurst.

When the Fair commenced, they soon drew an audience, and after Zep had given a display of her powers, Dick took his turn while she stood close by him in the centre of the ring to hand him what he needed.

A few yards away a crowd of people standing, six or seven deep, gazed open-mouthed at Dick's manipulation of three billiard balls, which he made dissolve into space and re-appear at his elbows, and other unlikely places, at will.

Suddenly a commotion was caused among the on-lookers by a man who was seen attempting to make his way through the crowd. They pushed him back and hustled him.

"It's her! It's her!" he cried at the top of his voice as he struggled wildly and pushed the people on one side.

"Let me at him! It's him as took my girl from me, I tell yer," he shouted loudly.

Dick absorbed in his trick took no notice for a moment of the disturbance, but Zep had already recognised the voice and knew it to be her father's.

With another wild yell he at last burst into the ring. The girl, horror-stricken for a moment then noticed something bright and gleaming in his hand. She saw his arm upraised to strike at Dick, but before he could get within reach of him, she had thrown herself between them, to ward off the blow and in a second

the infuriated man had buried the knife in her breast.

She fell without a groan, while Dick, scarce realising what had happened, sprang at Travers and seizing him by the throat bore him to the ground.

In a moment all was confusion and uproar. Several men rushed forward to Dick's assistance and helped to secure his assailant, while others ran to aid the stricken girl. As soon as Dick had seen Travers in the grip of two burly farmers, he ran to Zep who was still lying where she had fallen, her head resting against a man's knee who was striving to staunch the blood which flowed from the wound in her breast.

"Run for a doctor, quick," cried Dick, as he knelt and placed his arm around her. Her pallid face and gasping breath told him the wound was a serious one.

Just then a policeman pushed his way through the crowd.

"What's all the row about, Mister?" he growled to Dick.

"Arrest that man," said Dick, hoarsely; "he has killed his daughter."

"Not so fast, young feller," said the bucolic constable, as he produced a note book and felt in his pockets for a pencil.

"She's not dead yet, is she? This is a case for the 'orspital and I must have help."

He blew his whistle and two more constables quickly arrived on the scene.

"Which is the man that stabbed her?" asked the policeman with the notebook.

"Haven't I told you, while you are asking questions the girl is dying," cried Dick savagely.

"Are there any witnesses," said the judicial constable, looking round with importance.

"Yes, yes," came the reply in a chorus from the crowd.

Dick meanwhile had lifted Zep gently in his arms and carried her up the few steps into the van, and laid her on his bed. Then trying to think of the best thing to do till the doctor came, he cut her bodice open, and soaking a towel in cold water, pressed it over the gaping wound. Then he tried to pour a little whisky between her lips, and just as he had done so the door was pushed open and a man stepped into the van.

"I am Dr. MacDonald," he said briefly. "They told me there was a girl hurt as I drove across the common."

Dick nodded and stepped on one side.

"She has been stabbed," he explained.

"Ha," said the doctor, as he removed the towel and disclosed the wound.

"This is in a dangerous spot," he remarked, as he placed his thumb over the wound.

"Just run across to my dog-cart which is standing in the road and tell my man to give you my bag. I have bandages and things there."

Dick ran with all haste and getting the bag from the coachman brought it quickly back.

"Open it please," said the doctor, who still kept his thumb over the wound, "and give me that roll of pink lint and a bandage."

After making a thick compress and securing it with a bandage the doctor took his hypodermic case from his pocket and dissolving a tablet, at once injected it into the girl's shoulder.

"Is it serious?" asked Dick at length in a hoarse whisper.

"Very, I'm afraid. Have her removed at once to the hospital. You have no suitable accommodation here. They will do all they can for her. I can do no more."

"Thank you, doctor."

"I see the police are coming with an ambulance," said the doctor as he looked out from the door. "Get her there as soon as you can. Good-day."

Dick turned and took hold of Zep's hand. It was very cold, but some colour seemed to be coming into her cheeks.

"Zep," he said, gently, as he pushed her hair back from her forehead, "don't you know me?"

A faint smile seemed to cross her face but her eyes remained closed, and she showed no sign of returning consciousness.

Just then, there was a tap on the door and a policeman put his head in.

"We've got a stretcher here from the 'orspital. Are you ready?"

"Yes," Dick replied, "the doctor, who has just gone, said she must be removed there very carefully and at once. I will lift her myself," he added, as he propped open the door with a stool.

Outside, a great throng of people, who had gathered out of curiosity, pressed round the caravan, and were kept back by the police.

Very gently Dick lifted the

girl and laid her on the ambulance which was carried by two men, and he followed them with their burden.

They soon reached the small cottage hospital which was not far away, and they were received by a bright-looking young matron.

"I'm sorry our rules do not permit you to go up to the ward with her," she said to Dick, "but if the house surgeon thinks the case is serious I will send for you at once."

Dick thanked her and said he would remain outside till he received the message.

For a half-an-hour he paced the road, never going out of sight of the building, until he saw a man like a porter open the door come out on the step and beckon to him.

He hastened up the gravel path to the building to meet him.

"The matron says will you come at once," he said.

Dick followed him in silence through the hall and up a staircase on to a broad landing, from which two corridors running right and left led to the wards.

A nurse met him at the door.

"I'm sorry, the surgeon says

her condition is very serious," she said to Dick, "but she is conscious now, and asking for someone. You will be very quiet, won't you?"

Dick nodded his head and followed the nurse into the ward.

In a cot, round which a screen had been placed, he saw Zep's pale face, her dark curls clustered on the pillow.

She recognised him when he got to the bedside, and he stooped and kissed her. Then taking her hand he sat by the side of the cot looking anxiously at her without speaking.

"Dick, Dick!" she said at length, in a voice little above a whisper.

"Yes, dear."

"I'm so glad it was I as got it, not you."

Dick's eyes filled with tears, and he strove hard to keep them back.

He could only press her hand in reply.

She smiled at him again.

"I've been so happy with you, Dick," she murmured again. "Tell father I forgive him, won't yer?"

Dick nodded his head, for he couldn't trust himself to speak.

"Glad 'twas me, Dick," she whispered again, and then closed her eyes, still smiling, as if in sleep.

Dick sat for half-an-hour still holding her hand, until the nurse came noiselessly from behind the screen and stooped over the cot.

"She is asleep," she said quietly. "You had better go now, and we will send for you if there is any change."

Dick rose with a heavy heart and bending over kissed the sleeping girl.

"I shall be in the caravan on the fair ground," he said to the

nurse, "send there or I will come early in the morning."

He walked quickly to the fair ground and found a policeman waiting at the door of the van, to warn him to attend the police court at ten o'clock in the morning.

"I 'opes the young woman ain't dead," he remarked as he pocketed a shilling Dick slipped into his hand.

"No, she is not dead, but her condition is very serious," replied Dick. Then bidding the man good-night, he entered the van and shut the door.

CHAPTER XX

LITTLE sleep came to Dick that night, and he was astir before six o'clock in the morning wondering if it was too early to go to the hospital.

No message had come, and he hoped it meant good news.

Having made himself a cup of coffee he set off for the hospital, and arrived there as the clock was striking seven.

As he crossed the hall, the nurse who had spoken to him the night previous, came down the staircase and beckoned him into a waiting-room. He saw from her face she had bad news.

"Am I too late?" he asked anxiously.

She nodded her head.

"She never recovered consciousness," she replied. "We did all we could. Perhaps you had better see the house surgeon. He will be here shortly."

Dick felt completely stunned, and he scarcely knew what he answered. He tried to thank

the nurse for her kindness, and murmuring something about returning later to see the doctor, he bent his steps towards the town in order to find the police station.

He did not care to go back to the caravan, which would doubtless be a centre of attraction for the curious, for the news of the tragedy was already the talk of the place.

Fortunately the Fair was now over, and most of the shows and vans would be off to other places.

Having discovered the Police Station he asked to see the superintendent, and was shown into the office of that official.

He found a big, broad-shouldered man with a grey moustache seated at a desk, who asked him to state his business.

"I have come to tell you that my wife, who was stabbed, on the fair ground last night, died

at the hospital this morning," said Dick, briefly.

The superintendent nodded his head quickly, and drew a large book towards him.

"Let me see," he replied, as he opened the book and turned over the leaves rapidly. "A man was arrested, I think, Ah, yes, I see, gave the name of Joseph Travers, no address. He is entered on the charge sheet for this morning."

Just then a sergeant entered the room hurriedly and spoke a few words in a low voice to the superintendent, whose face at once changed as he looked at Dick.

"Good heavens," he ejaculated "do you say he is dead?"

The sergeant nodded his head.

"The man Travers has just been found dead in his cell. Hanged himself with a woollen muffler," he said, turning to Dick.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Dick, with a sigh of relief. "He was her father."

"Well, it will save someone trouble," remarked the superintendent. "Of course there will be an inquest. This one will not affect you, but it will be necessary for you to appear at the

other. The hospital authorities will no doubt notify us."

Dick left the police station feeling utterly unstrung. The tragic events of the past twenty-four hours almost overwhelmed him, and the course of his life, which lately had flowed so peacefully now seemed suddenly changed. He felt he could never return to it again.

He wandered about looking for rooms where he should stay for the few days it would be necessary for him to remain in Lymerton, and after a while found some in a small cottage in a secluded lane. He struck a bargain with the landlady on the spot, and arranged to occupy them at once.

This being done he returned to the caravan and removed his few valued possessions, for he had determined to dispose of it as early as possible. Fortunately, only a few weeks previous, he had heard of a man in Southampton who wanted to purchase one, and he at once wired to him that his was for sale.

Then he returned to the hospital again, and heard from the house surgeon's lips, that Zep had died from internal hæmor-

rhage caused by the wound which had penetrated the lungs.

The tragic ending of his girl wife, who had sacrificed her life for his, was borne in upon him with renewed force. He felt he had not loved her as he should have done, but yet he was glad he had married her, and tried to make her life happy. Her love for him had been of the kind that takes its highest delight in service, and that she had given without stint.

After the inquest, which was held early on the following morning, Dick was the solitary mourner who followed Zep to the graveside in the old churchyard. As he stood bareheaded and watched the earth close over her his heart was heavy.

For the first time he began to realise what he had lost, and that probably the one human being who had really loved him had gone for ever.

As he retraced his steps to the lodgings he had taken, his great anxiety now was to get away from the place and all the associations of his life on the road.

What he should do for a living he could not tell,—but he determined to go back to London as soon as he could, and there try to obtain work of some description.

The next morning he received a visit from the man in Southampton and took him to see the caravan and horse, and after some bargaining eventually sold the lot for forty pounds. With what little money he had saved, he found he had a capital of fifty pounds clear to start the world again. After paying a final visit to Zep's grave and laying on it a cross of the most beautiful roses he could procure, he settled up with his landlady and caught the first train to London.

CHAPTER XXI

IT was late in the afternoon when Dick, with the faithful Rip, arrived at Waterloo. Placing the one bag which contained his belongings in the cloak room, he set off on foot across Waterloo Bridge.

The mist was rising from the river at the close of a warm September day. Away eastward the great dome of St. Pauls was only faintly outlined through the haze of orange brown, which enshrouded the buildings below. In the west, the towers of the Palace of Westminster stood silhouetted in dark grey, against the yellow sky, and some barges glided slowly along the bosom of the silent waterway. The toilers, on foot and on bus, glad to leave the city behind, thronged the footpaths in a seeming endless procession their faces set to the south, while Dick pursued his way towards the Strand. He drank in the familiar scene with avidity, as every Londoner

does after a long absence. Even the tarry smell from the wood blocks stacked along the footpath in the Strand (for the road was up) he sniffed with a kind of inward delight.

He had little fear of being recognised by any old acquaintances, as he had grown a moustache and a short pointed beard during his country wanderings. From Trafalgar Square he boarded a bus going in the direction of Bloomsbury, with the object of finding some cheap apartments. He alighted at the corner of Tottenham Court Road to explore the district and at length found himself in Guildford Street. He tried several houses, but in every case he was sickened by the first look of the interior.

Generally, the door was opened by a slatternly-looking, half-starved girl, with a cap and apron that had once been white, and whose face was smudged with soot.

At one more imposing dwelling than the rest, a flaccid faced Swiss boy with hair like a clothes brush, and a soiled paper collar, many sizes too large for him, informed him that "the mistress was hout." In almost every house there was the same stale, close smell and shabby furniture, and at last he nearly gave up his quest in despair.

He was getting both tired and hungry, so he turned his steps towards Soho, where he remembered a certain little Italian restaurant, where years ago he had been wont to dine occasionally.

On arriving there, he found the old order had changed. The once plain little dining-room was now ornately decorated with mirrors, and painted panels in a pretentious style, and was crowded with diners.

He found a small table in a corner at the end of the room, and telling the waiter to bring him the "Daily Telegraph," he eagerly scanned the column headed "Furnished Apartments to Let." Making a note of several that seemed likely, he was soon engrossed with his dinner. Getting through it as quickly as possible, he paid his

bill and set off in the direction of Margaret Street, which was the nearest address he had taken.

It was quite dark as he walked along Oxford Street, and the footpath was thronged with the heterogeneous crowd that frequents that thoroughfare at night. Turning along Wells Street into Margaret Street, he at length found the house he was in search of. A little, white-haired, old lady opened the door, who showed him a bedroom which actually, to his relief, looked clean and comfortable. Coming to terms with her for the apartment and his breakfast each morning, he agreed to take it, and at once set off to Waterloo to get his bag.

By the time he returned to Margaret Street he was both tired and weary.

The next day, he reminded himself, he must set to work to find some kind of employment, for the fifty pounds, which formed his total capital, would not last very long however carefully he husbanded it.

The following morning, before his breakfast was ready, he went out to find the nearest newspaper shop to get a "Telegraph" and "Chronicle," and on his return soon became immersed in the

columns devoted to "Situations Vacant."

With one of the papers propped up against the coffee pot he read through line after line of the advertisements. It seemed to him that every imaginable kind of individual was wanted except himself. At length he came across one advertisement that appeared hopeful.

It ran as follows:—

"A gentleman of good address required as secretary to newly formed limited Company. No previous experience necessary. Apply to Manager, Cramolite Co., 11 Eastcourt Buildings, Mark Lane, E.C.

He decided to make a personal application as early as possible, and after making an unusually careful toilet, and leaving Rip safely locked up, he took a 'bus to the city, and after some little difficulty discovered the address. According to an imposing brass plate at the side of the entrance, the Cramilite Company occupied the third floor, and toiling up the staircase he entered the office. He asked at a little ground glass window labelled "Enquiries," if he could see the manager, and

was requested by a diminutive youth, with a very high collar for his name, and on giving it was told that he would have to wait awhile.

In about half an hour's time, the young gentleman condescended to descend from his stool and beckoning Dick to go forward showed him into an inner office, where he found a smartly dressed man, of a distinctly Jewish cast of countenance, seated at a roll-top desk.

Looking up sharply as Dick entered, he motioned him to a chair.

"What can I have the pleasure of doing for you, sir?" he asked blandly.

"I called with reference to your advertisement requiring a secretary," said Dick.

"Ha. Yes. We have a vacancy for a gentleman in that capacity. I presume you have had some business experience and can find me suitable references?"

"I haven't had much experience in business," replied Dick. "I understood from your advertisement it was not necessary."

"Well, it is not absolutely essential, certainly. The duties are not onerous, and the salary

is a hundred pounds a year. I may say the Directors stipulate that the gentleman who is appointed, should take up fully paid-up shares to the value of two hundred pounds in the Company. I suppose you are prepared to do this?" asked the manager as he placed the tips of his beringed fingers together.

"No. I'm afraid not. In fact, I have not that amount at my command," replied Dick, slowly.

"I'm sorry. In that case it will be of no use discussing the matter further. Good morning."

Dick took up his hat without reply, and walked out of the room and hurried off westward to find the address given in the next advertisement he had selected, which happened to be in a street off the Strand. Here another disappointment awaited him, for he was told that two good references were essential, and these of course he could not furnish.

The necessity for references had not struck him before. How was he to get them without declaring his identity? Everyone who knew him thought he was dead, and now the want of testimonials of some kind barred him from obtaining employment.

He turned the matter over in his mind as he wandered aimlessly about the streets, and wished himself back with his caravan again plodding along the sweet smelling country lanes.

The days went by and lengthened into weeks, and he was no nearer the solution of his difficulty. He replied to advertisements by the score, but it was evident that no one would give him any but the most menial employment without testimonials of some description. Meanwhile his money was melting rapidly away, and in a very short time he knew he would be completely stranded.

One evening, after another disheartening day, he went out into the streets to try and throw off the terrible depression that had come over him. He had carefully avoided the West-End during the daytime, in fear of being recognised by anyone who had known him: a fear that possessed him as if he was a hunted criminal.

He walked the whole length of Oxford Street, then turning down Park Lane wandered aimlessly along Piccadilly until he came to Leicester Square.

Outside, the Empire Theatre

was a blaze of light, and he stood for a few minutes watching the hansoms as they drove up, one after the other and deposited their gaily dressed occupants, who passed inside. - As he stood thus thinking of how often in days gone by he too had formed one of that throng, a great desire came over him to enter once more, It would help him to forget his cares for a few hours at any rate, he soliloquised, and ill as he could afford it, he quickly crossed the road and asking for a ticket for the Grand Circle, soon found himself ascending the thickly carpeted staircase, and mingling with the crowd that thronged the promenade.

After awhile the depression seemed to leave him, and gave way to a kind of exhilaration, from the colour and life which surrounded him.

The ballet, which was in progress, did not interest him, his only desire was to watch the endless procession of men and women who sauntered past. Presently he found a vacant chair against the wall, and ordering something to drink, sat and looked on at the faces passing to and fro.

he recognised and

remembered as old habitues in days gone by. Their faces then were young and fresh, but now, in spite of paint and powder, looked aged and careworn. Some bore the indelible stamp of vice, while others wore the abandoned smile of the reckless. Some he noticed on whom he had lavished money years ago, but they did not even give him a passing glance, while others looked askance at him as he sat alone; but he felt no inclination to plunge into the vortex again. He even smiled bitterly as he glanced at many of the men, young and old, who sauntered past.

At length the whole scene began to pall upon him. He had had enough and making his way to the exit, passed down the broad staircase into the street.

A newsboy was shouting "Last Edition."

"Paper, sir," he cried, as he held up the contents bill in his hand.

Dick read the lines in heavy type, abstractedly :

TERRIBLE MOTOR SMASH !

PEER'S SON KILLED.

were the words that met his eyes.

Almost mechanically he took

a paper from the boy's hand and threw him a penny and glancing at the top "Stop Press" column under the light of the lamp read:—

"FATAL MOTOR ACCIDENT.

Graystoke.

Our Correspondent wires—

A terrible motor-car accident occurred here this afternoon. The car was driven by Lord Alvanley, and while proceeding down Gravel Hill, a very steep incline, at a rapid speed, the brakes failed to act and it dashed into a wall and upset. Lord

Alvanley and a friend, Mr. Hillare, who was in the car, were both thrown out and the former, who was the son of the Earl of Graystoke, was killed on the spot."

Dick read and re-read the paragraph again and again, unable to realise it.

Slowly the fact came home to him, that Alvanley, his brother was dead, and he was his father's heir.

He folded the paper and putting it in his pocket, still absorbed in thought, turned his steps towards his lodgings.

CHAPTER XXII

THE morning papers confirmed the news. Lord Alvanley had been thrown with great violence against the wall, which fractured his skull, and had died before aid could be obtained.

Dick was saddened and shocked by the news, though he hadn't seen his elder brother for years; Alvanley and he had never got on well together. He had quarrelled with him after leaving Sandhurst, and had always attributed his father's estrangement and harshness to his influence.

The title was now his when he liked to claim it, and he was also heir to the earldom. Should he claim it or not, was the question which occupied his thoughts. His father, the old earl, would now be over seventy and would no doubt feel Alvanley's loss acutely, and in the event of his death, unless he came forward, the title would go to a distant branch of the family.

It did not take him long to make up his mind, and before ten o'clock he had packed his belongings, paid his landlady a week's rent in lieu of notice, and was in a hansom on his way to Euston.

Changing at Bletchley, a short journey of twenty minutes brought him to Graystoke, a little roadside station, about two miles from the castle.

It was more than ten years since he had set his foot on the station platform, and he looked round with some curiosity as he stepped out of a third class compartment, and wondered if he would recognise any old faces.

The country had not altered at any rate. All looked just the same as he remembered it when a boy returning home from school for the holidays. He did not recognise the porter who came forward to take his bag, nor the station-master who was obsequiously assisting a little

man with white hair and clean shaven face, whom Dick had noticed on the platform at Euston, and whose face was somewhat familiar to him. Now he remembered him as his father's solicitor in the city. Outside the station a brougham from the castle was waiting, into which the lawyer stepped and was driven away.

Dick instructed the porter to send his bag up to the "Graystoke Arms" by the first conveyance, and set off on foot for the village which could be seen with the grey tower of its old church nestling at the foot of a richly wooded hill.

The journey had given Dick time for thought, and he had made up his mind not to go straight to the castle, but to take a room at the village inn under his assumed name, after which he would seek an interview with his father.

As the road wound round, the turrets of Graystoke Castle which stood on the hillside, could be seen above the tops of the dark fir trees, which almost hid it from view. Dick smiled as his eye rested on the scene when he thought that all these broad acres would be his some day, and yet

all the money he possessed was a few pounds he had in his pocket.

As he walked up the village street he wondered if anyone would recognise him, but most of the shops had a shutter up, and all the inhabitants seemed to be indoors at their mid-day meal.

At the end of the rambling street and facing the green, stood the inn, an old gabled building which had been a famous hostelry in the coaching days, and which still bore traces of its former importance in a huge signboard of quaint design which projected from above the entrance, on which was emblazoned the Graystoke Arms.

As he entered the low-ceiled lobby, the landlord, whose face was new to him, came forward to greet him.

Dick ordered some luncheon and walked into the coffee-room.

How familiar the old wainscotted room, with its ponderous mahogany sideboard, appeared to him; and hanging above it was an engraved portrait of his father, one of many distributed years ago to a grateful tenantry.

"Hope you've come to make a stay, sir?" remarked the landlord heartily, as he placed a plate of cold roast beef before Dick.

"There is some good fishing to be had in the river."

"I don't know yet," replied Dick, as he seated himself at the table.

"Perhaps you're a stranger hereabouts, sir?"

"Not altogether. I was here some years ago, but I don't remember your face."

"I've only been here this three years back, when my uncle died. Perhaps you remember him, sir? He was bred up here, man and boy, and was in the Earl's service for over twenty-five years."

"Yes, I remember him, and the Earl, he is still alive?"

"Aye, but it's a sad day for him. You've heard of the death of his son maybe—through being thrown out of his motor-car, only yesterday. They say the shock may kill the old gentleman at his age, and his only son too."

"Yes, it's a sad business," remarked Dick, who was not anxious to continue the conversation.

"I have a bag coming up from the station, and may want a room here to-night. Will you look after it for me?"

"Certainly, sir," replied the man, as he left the room.

After finishing his meal, Dick took his hat and set off in the direction of the castle.

Leaving the village to the right he soon reached the lodge gates and entered the long drive.

Should he be able to see his father, and what reception would he meet with, were the thoughts that passed through his mind as he approached the building. A short distance farther the drive widened out, and the great pile of grey buildings stood before him. The only sign of life was a peacock which was perched on the terrace, solitary and alone. Every blind was closely drawn, while a flag hung limply at half mast on the north tower.

He pulled at the bell chain that hung near the entrance, and in a few minutes the door was opened by a white haired old butler in plain black livery.

Dick recognised the old servitor at once who eyed the visitor narrowly.

"Don't you remember me, Cadby?" he asked, as he stood and looked him in the face.

The old man's features grew white and his limbs began to tremble under him. He seemed struck dumb, until Dick put out his hand, then a smile of

recognition broke over his face.

"Mister Ronald," he managed to gasp out at length.

"Yes, Cadby, but don't look so scared. I'm not a ghost.

"Thank God," exclaimed the old man, "that I should have lived to see this day."

"I'll come in, Cadby, and we'll talk about it," said Dick (or Ronald as we must now call him) as he stepped once more across the threshold of his fathers.

He walked across the great hall and opened the door of a small ante-room that gave entrance to the library, followed by the butler.

"We all thought you dead, sir," he said, as he closed the door.

"I am still alive, Cadby, as you see, and now tell me about my father."

"He is in a sad state, sir. This terrible affair has quite broken him down. He is in his own sitting-room and has seen no one until Mr. Bryne, the lawyer, came to-day."

"Is he with him now?"

"No, sir, my lord—I mean," replied the old man correcting himself. "He is lunching in the small dining-room."

"Well, I will go up and see my father alone, Cadby," said Ronald, quietly. "Please say nothing of this to anyone just now."

Cadby bowed his head, and Ronald opened the door and crossing the hall again ascended the staircase.

On reaching the first floor he turned to the right down a long corridor, and at length stopped at a door that he knew gave access to his father's room, and knocked softly. There was no response and presently he tapped again a little louder.

"Come in," said a querulous voice. Turning the handle Ronald entered.

There was a fair light in the room, for the sun was shining through the white blinds, when Ronald looked on his father's face after many years. He could scarcely recognise him as he sat huddled up in a great arm-chair, wrapped in a dressing gown, with his head buried in his chest.

"Is it you, Cadby?" asked the Earl listlessly, without raising his eyes.

"No, sir," said Ronald, quietly, as he stepped softly across the room.

At the sound of the voice the

Earl raised his head for a moment and fixed his eyes on the figure before him.

"Who are you? Why do you come here?"

"Father, don't you remember me," said Ronald, as he looked down at the shrunken form seated in the chair.

"Why do you call me father? I have no children. My sons are dead."

"Not both dead, father. I am Ronald."

"Ronald," repeated the Earl. "Ronald died years ago. Go away. Why do you come here to annoy me?"

"Ronald did not die. He stands before you. Won't you believe me, father?" he pleaded.

"It is true I intended to take my own life and failed. Then in despair I disappeared and hid myself from those who knew me. Hearing of Geoffrey's terrible death, I hastened to you, in the hope I could do something to retrieve the years I have lost."

The eyes of the old man seemed to pierce him through and through, and then he staggered to his feet and put his hands on his shoulders.

"The voice I know, and you have your mother's eyes," he murmured incoherently.

"Father," cried Ronald, as he grasped his hands.

"My son, my son!" exclaimed the Earl, as he sank back exhausted in his chair.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RONALD followed his brother's body to its last resting-place in the vault of the old parish church where the Graystokes had for centuries been laid.

The old Earl was so prostrated that he was unable to leave his bed, and it was with difficulty that Ronald could absent himself from his side, for he would scarcely let him out of his sight.

He had quickly taken his brother's place, and little was said in the household. Few indeed remembered the story of his disappearance, and the general impression was that he had been travelling abroad.

Of course when his reappearance became known to the outside world there was some talk. Most people had jumped to the conclusion he had died years ago. Some even expressed the opinion that the new Lord Alvanley was an impostor. Where had he been to, and what had he been doing? were the questions asked

by the gossips: but Ronald gave little heed to what the world said. He had been acknowledged by his father, that was sufficient, and he avoided society and lived in practical seclusion in the castle.

In a few months' time the Earl had recovered sufficient strength to undertake a journey to San Remo, where he had a beautiful villa. Here, in company with Ronald, he quietly spent the winter. His great desire now was that Ronald should marry. When the Spring came, much against Ronald's wish, he gave orders for his town house in Eaton Square, which had remained closed for years, to be got ready for them, as he had made up his mind to spend the season in London. Ronald did not look forward to their return to town with any degree of pleasure, but saw it was no use opposing his father's whim.

The end of May found them in-

stalled in the great gloomy house in Eaton Square. Ronald had never told his father the details of his wanderings, or of his marriage with Zep, but he could never forget the girl's devotion and her tragic end.

The first opportunity that presented, he ran down to Dymington, and made his way to the old churchyard to place some fresh flowers at the foot of the simple marble cross he had had placed to mark the spot where Zep rested.

Another month went by, and the season was at its height, when one sunny afternoon Ronald found himself in Bond Street. At the corner of Brook Street there was a block and the traffic had been stopped. As he stood for a moment waiting to cross, a lady dressed in black came out of a shop and stepped quickly across the pavement towards a smart brougham that was drawn up at the kerb. In doing so, she slipped and would have fallen had not Ronald grasped her arm in time to prevent it.

As she turned to thank him their eyes met.

The recognition was mutual.

"Madge!" he exclaimed, as he put out his hand.

She seemed too surprised to reply, as she put her hand in his.

"What a strange chance we should meet here," she said at last with a smile of real pleasure.

"The shuttle of Fate," cried Ronald, with a little laugh. "I'm not going to let you go now, Madge. I want a talk with you," he continued, looking into her eyes again.

Telling her coachman to drive home, they crossed the street together.

"So you have returned to civilization again?" she asked as they walked down Bond Street.

"Yes. I've joined the ranks of polite society once more, but let us find some place where we can have a quiet chat. Will you have some tea?"

"There is nothing I should like better."

"Well let us try this place," he said, as he indicated a sign over a door between two shops, inscribed the "Rose Tea-rooms."

They entered a dark passage, and turning down a short staircase came to a long low room dimly lighted by rose shaded lamps. The floor was covered with thick rugs, and arranged along both sides were alcoves

draped with rose-coloured curtains each of which contained a small table and a couple of chairs. They found one unoccupied, and were soon waited upon by a deft waitress in the daintiest of caps and the whitest of aprons.

"Now, Madge, tell me about yourself," said Ronald, when the tea had been brought.

"I'm afraid there is little to tell. My husband died six months ago, very suddenly, and since then, I've practically been a wanderer on the face of the earth."

"And you, Ronald," she continued, "I read of your brother's terrible death, and you are now, I suppose, Lord Albanley."

Ronald nodded in reply.

"Yes, my fortunes were at their lowest ebb when I heard of poor Albanley's accident. My strolling life had come to an end before then. Something happened that gave me a distaste for it for ever."

"What was that?" asked Madge.

"You did not know I married?"

"No. You did not tell me that," she replied softly.

I married shortly after I saw you in Halesworth, and in a few weeks my wife was killed in trying to save my life."

"My poor Ronald," murmured Madge, as she rested her hand on the back of his with a touch of womanly sympathy.

"Madge, we are both free and by some strange providence we have been brought together again. No words need be wasted between you and me. You know I never loved any woman as I love you."

"I don't deserve it, Ronald," she said very gently. "I chose my lot and should bear the punishment."

"Please God your punishment then is now at an end," said Ronald, looking into her face.

"You don't want us to drift apart again, Madge?" he asked as he grasped the hand that lay on his.

She raised her head and he read the answer in her tear filled eyes.

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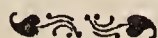
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Longmans Magazine, Oct., 1902.

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PURE CONCENTRATED

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“An absolutely pure, highly nourishing, and easily assimilated Cocoa, unsurpassed for flavour and strength; in short, an all-round Ideal Food Beverage.”

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